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ERMINA MONTROSE;
OR,
THE COTTAGE OF THE VALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

WITH CHARACTERS FROM LIFE.

Ye good distressed !
Ye noble few ! who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile ;
And what your bounded view, which only saw
A little part, deem'd evil, is no more.

THOMSON.

BY EMILY CLARK,
GRAND-DAUGHTER OF THE LATE COLONEL FREDERICK,
AND AUTHOR OF
“*IANTHE ; OR, THE FLOWER OF CAERNARVON.*”

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WITH CHARACTERS FROM THE

THE COTTAGE OF THE VALE

BY CLARK



T. Davison,
White-Friars.

ERMINA MONTROSE.

CHAPTER I.

They little knew, that wealth had pow'r
To make the constant rove ;
They little knew, the splendid dow'r
Could add a bliss to love.

They little knew the human breast
Could pant for sordid ore ;
Or of a faithful heart possessed,
Could ever wish for more.

WILLIAMS.

IN travelling through Cumberland, the romantic scenery around her brought to Ermina's memory her native place ; and a soft melancholy stole over her soul as she viewed the vales, dells, and hanging-woods which adorned the sides of the mountains. Nature now flourished in all its luxuriant charms : for it was the beginning of June,

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and

and the banks of the lakes were ornamented with a variety of foliage, and a profusion of wild flowers. She anticipated, with pleasure, the sylvan scenes which she had long sighed for, and amongst whose pastoral beauties she was going to pass her days, most probably for a length of time, glad to escape from the tumultuous crowd.

The last beams of the sun rested on the summit of the mountains, and the shadows of the trees stretched over the plains, as she entered the park gates, which opened to the road that led to the abbey. The deep shades of evening that had begun to spread around, threw a solemn gloom over this spacious and venerable building, situated in a deep vale, apparently so much secluded from the world that it must have been particularly well adapted for the inhabitants of a monastery, to whom it had, in fact, formerly belonged. It forcibly, indeed, reminded our heroine of the monasteries she had

had seen in France; and as she approached nearer, she almost wrought herself into a belief, that she should see some nun or friar advance from it to welcome her. But the delusion vanished when, on the postilion's ringing at the bell, a powdered footman came forth from the house, and, on her asking for Mrs. St. Austin, shewed her into a library, whilst he went to acquaint his lady with the arrival of her expected guest. In his absence, she amused herself in looking over the books, of which there was a fine collection, and had just finished examining them, when he returned to conduct her to his mistress. With a fluttering heart she followed him to a handsome, large, but antique drawing-room, where, seated on a sofa, was Mrs. St. Austin, who rose to receive her on her entrance, placed her by her side, and addressed her with the utmost affability. This lady had just attained her sixtieth year, though time had made little devastation in her appearance. Her black

eyes still sparkled with a lustre that even a juvenile beauty might have envied ; and not a grey hair had yet strayed amongst her glossy brown locks, which were combed neatly up before. She was tall and fat, with a nobleness in her deportment that struck awe into every stranger, but which was soon removed by the affability of her manners. Her skin was smooth and white, and a bloom still remained on her cheeks, though not that exquisite tint of the rose that had once glowed there ; and a few wrinkles on her brow alone denoted she was no longer young. Her dress was black, having never worn any other colour since her husband's death. It was plain and neat, but quite in the old-fashioned style : for she was not one of those vain antiquated belles who wish to place themselves on a level with their grand-daughters ; on the contrary, she gloried in her years, and in looking so well and hearty at her age, enjoying uninterrupted good health, except now and then

then a slight attack from the rheumatism. Though educated in the fashionable world, she had, for a great length of time, relinquished its follies, living in a frugal, simple manner, that preserved her constitution and beauty, which can have no worse enemy than dissipation: late hours and luxurious living being the destroyer of personal charms. In the country, she always retired to rest at ten o'clock, eat very little meat, but chiefly vegetables, soups, and puddings; and, when in London, never sat up later than eleven. Devereux had told Ermina, she was an eccentric character, and this line of conduct, so different from that generally observed by people of fortune and fashion, in every stage of life, made her appear such to the world, but to Miss Montrose in quite an opposite light; who considered her ideas as singular, yet the most rational she had ever met with; and how far preferable it was for a woman of her years to be courting repose at an early hour,

hour, instead of wasting the whole night, as most antiquated dowagers did, in playing at cards, losing their money, and ruffling their tempers.

But, with all her virtues and understanding, for daring to act differently from the rest of the world, she was styled by many persons a proud, whimsical old woman; as she likewise possessed a very high spirit, not liking to associate with any but people of family and merit, disdaining those who had riches alone to recommend them. This delicacy of thinking, therefore (from the former class being but small), made her keep very little company; for, unless any particular circumstance obliged her to break through her general rule, she never admitted any one into her society whose manners and connexions were not thoroughly to be approved of. In company she was cheerful and good-humoured, attaching all amiable young people to her,
from

from always having some entertaining anecdotes of former times to amuse them with, and a fund of vivacity that pleased and instructed them at the same time. She was charitable without ostentation, feeling without affectation, and generous without extravagance ; extremely attached to her nephew, Lionel Devereux, to whom it was supposed she would leave her immense fortune, as it was quite in her own power, and she was more partial to him than to any other of her relations.

Her disposition was enthusiastic, and if she formed an attachment, it was always permanent and difficult to be lessened ; while, on the contrary, if she conceived an antipathy to any one from their ill conduct, it was as impossible to be eradicated : for she was a warm friend, and a severe enemy. Ermina, fortunately, was exactly formed to win her affections : being unaffected, elegant, and refined ; and the sedulous atten-

tions she bestowed on her protectress, soon gained her whole heart, and she grew so exceedingly indulgent to her, that she found herself as happy as it was possible for her to expect to be in a dependent situation. The only circumstance she disliked, was the constant reading in which Mrs. St. Austin employed her, that often lasted so many hours as quite to exhaust her; nor could she make any objections, as she plainly perceived it was one of the highest pleasures her patroness enjoyed; who would, notwithstanding, have made her instantly relinquish it, had she an idea it was prejudicial to her health. But she looked so well, that it was impossible to imagine that her health was actually in a very precarious state, and that the various afflictions she had suffered, the remembrance of which still haunted her, had undermined and so much weakened her constitution, that a few more such shocks as she had undergone, would inevitably hurry her to a premature

mature grave. Of this she was herself sensible; for although the feverish lustre of her eye, and hectic bloom of her cheek deceived every other person, yet her inward sensations prevented the deception reaching to herself; and the constant exertion of her lungs seemed as if it would hasten the fatal moment; and she was meekly resigned to quit a world, where she had met with continued woe, and unexampled, undeserved treachery. The man she loved had been unfaithful; scorned and insulted her; and the friends she confided in had thrown her unmercifully on the world, unpitied and unsollicitous for her fate. An unknown and bitter enemy pursued and banished her from every situation where her almost broken heart sought a peaceful asylum. Her beloved parents reposed in the silent grave; and no consolation remained for her wounded breast, but patiently and with resignation to await the moment when her dust was to mingle with theirs.

She often thought involuntarily of Lord Henry, as she wandered out to walk, when released from her occupations with Mrs. St. Austin, through the region of landscape, which the country where she resided presented to her view, and blamed herself for ever having listened to him after his first reprehensible conduct, and that she should have been so weak as again to let him perceive he continued dear to her; convinced he resembled many characters she had been told of, who delight from vanity in creating a passion they never mean seriously to return; and, though she endeavoured to despise him, she could not banish the melancholy and mortifying reflection that she was his dupe. But these sad thoughts would sometimes be diverted by the scenes of rural beauty amongst which she strolled, and, seated beneath the green shade of a tree, she would watch the transparent waters of a lake that softly flowed along, and amuse herself in singing plaintive

tive songs, whilst echo wafted her dulcet notes to the surrounding shores; and when the last rays of the sun shone on the silver rocks, and glistened through the verdant woods that hung on their clefts, she would slowly return to the abbey in calm and pensive meditation.

In one of her rambles, having fatigued herself with climbing up a steep hill, which presented from its summit the finest prospect she had ever seen, she returned after gratifying her curiosity, and having reached the bottom, retired for a few minutes to rest on a rock by the road side, whose lower part, projecting out, formed a convenient seat, while the woodbines and various other plants that grew amongst its fissures made a fragrant and natural canopy over her head. From this situation she perceived, at a little distance, a neat white cottage in a pleasant glade, out of which there presently issued two women, and a

fine noble-looking figure of a soldier. They approached nearer to her, from a narrow path that wound round the bottom of the hill she had ascended; and she discovered that the eldest of the women had hold of his arm, whilst the other, who was apparently very young and pretty, had his hand clasped in hers, and reclined her head weeping. The soldier himself looked very melancholy, and Ermina, who felt much interested at this affecting sight, from supposing the young female was his wife or sweetheart, and that he was going to leave her, perhaps to encounter all the dangers of war, could not avoid keeping her eyes fixed on them. They advanced close to the place where she was seated, and had walked but a little way past her, when the soldier stopped, and saying something in an agitated, hurried tone, embraced them both, and hastily departed without once looking back. The young woman remained almost motionless, gazing
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at his figure till he was no longer discernible, and when his form could no more be distinguished, gave a piercing shriek and fainted away in her companion's arms. Perceiving this, Ermina ran immediately to their assistance, the old woman being incapable of rendering any to the unfortunate girl, not knowing how with safety to disengage herself from her hapless burthen, but, aided by the feeling Miss Montrose, she supported her to the seat in the rock, whilst the latter taking off her straw hat, filled the crown with water from a neighbouring brook, and plentifully sprinkling her face, soon restored her to life. But when, on opening her dark blue eyes, she exclaimed "My Edward!" and looking mournfully around for him saw he was not there, she gave a deep sigh, and burst into an agony of sorrow. Ermina was glad to see her weep, though so much affected that she could not restrain her own tears, but hoped that weeping would
relieve

relieve and be beneficial to her, as it might prevent another fainting fit ; when the old woman thus addressed the poor young girl :

“ Weel, Helen, due nae be sae fash’d and full of wae, or I’s shall rue the de that ever I’s was bworn. Ye mun nae cry fae, or thee will braft thy grandys heart ; cheer up, thy luive will come agen.” Poor

Helen only answered with a sigh, her countenance assuming such a ghastly hue, that Ermina fearful she would relapse, advised to have her got home as soon as possible, telling the old woman she would assist her.

Calling down a thousand blessings on her head for her goodness and condescension, she followed her advice, and between them both they supported Helen to the cottage, where she likewise aided her grandmother (for so she found she was) in putting her to bed, as she was again inanimate and insensible to all that passed around. The interior of the cottage was clean and neat, but bore the marks of the greatest poverty,
and

and Ermina, finding on inquiry that their poverty was extreme, slipped a guinea into the old woman's hand, desiring she would get some nourishing food for her grand-daughter, and not think of expence, as she would herself supply her with money sufficient for that purpose; and that if Helen continued ill the next day, to send for a doctor. "Gods blessing be wud ye, sweet leady," said the grandmother, "for your guidness. Ah yence peer Helen was as gay as any simmer's mworn. On any holiday or fair, nae lass was e'er sae murry, or danced sae lightsome on the green. Shem befawt the pleaguy squire who fworced her own true luive to gea to war. Ay waes me when I think of the dees that be geane."

The old woman then proceeded to relate (her heart opened by Ermina's goodness) the history of herself and grand-daughter, which the latter found some difficulty

ficulty in understanding, as she was not very perfectly acquainted with the Cumberland dialect, and, as probably most of my readers may be in the same predicament, I will decline repeating it in her own words, and rest contented with giving a slight sketch of the story. Helen Primrose, grand-daughter of Dame Primrose, was left an orphan in her infancy, and heiress to the goods, chattels, &c. of a small farm, which her father had rented of a Squire Brandon, who lived in the neighbourhood. After the death of her son, Dame Primrose carried on the farming business for herself and little grand-daughter, contriving to maintain them both very comfortably, till Helen reached her sixteenth year, at which period her beauty was so striking, and her manners so modest, so gentle, and so obliging for one in such an inferior station, that she became the admiration of the villagers, and not one of the rustic swains but were proud to be

be noticed by her, and anxious to gain her heart : for, on each holiday and fair, when neatly attired in a clean linen gown, and straw hat trimmed with pale pink or lilac ribbon, she looked like Palemon's Lavinia ; as

Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty's self.

But of all the youths who sighed for her, no one was able to gain an interest in her heart but Edward Roseberry, the son of poor, but worthy, industrious people, who lived in the same village with herself. His was the nosegay she wore in her bosom—his, the fairing that adorned her head ; and hope soon fled from every other lover on observing the mutual affection that subsisted between them. They both looked forward to have their love sanctioned at the church, as Dame Primrose, though she might have had a better match for her grand-child, yet thought (as every good woman should) that there was more chance of happiness for her, in being united to the
man

man of her choice, than if obliged to marry one, indifferent, or perhaps disagreeable, to her, from sordid motives ; and as Edward was industrious, and had saved a little money, and Helen possessed a trifle to begin the world with, she had no doubt of her being exceedingly happy. Things were in this fair train, when most unfortunately at a dinner which Squire Brandon gave to all his tenants and their wives and daughters, on his coming to settle in the country, he saw sweet Helen Primrose, and, unhappily for her, that innocence and beauty which should have been a protection from any designs sinister to her virtue, made him anxious to seduce her : for he was one of those libertine characters who are the abhorrence of every worthy mind, and ought to be banished from society as its pest. He soon contrived to learn who she was, and every circumstance relative to her ; and found to his great mortification that her lover was an insuperable bar to his designs.

Persevering,

Persevering, however, in every species of vice, he determined, unconquerable as it appeared, to exert himself to remove it; and his machinations too fatally had effect.

After the first sight he had of Helen, he very frequently, when out a-riding, called at the farm under various pretences; the real motive of those visits being quite unsuspected by the artless old woman and her grand-daughter, who he saw was not to be moved by any flattery to her vanity, or prospect of superior grandeur, preferring to be wife to Edward Roseberry, rather than the first lady in the land. In consequence of making these observations, he consulted with his steward, as bad a man as himself, and they agreed that the best plan was to gain the confidence of Dame Primrose. Accordingly the steward was continually calling upon her, advising with her about farming affairs, and pay-
ing

ing her the greatest attention, which very naturally soon won the good woman's heart, who was proud of having such an excellent friend in his honour's steward. Conversing with her one day, he advised her to rent more ground, saying, "As her grand-daughter was going to be married, and a family would most probably ensue, it would be more comfortable and profitable for the young people." His reasoning made Dame Primrose say, "she should like to do so, but it required money which she could not command, only contriving to make both ends meet, except having a trifling sum by her, which was to be Helen's marriage portion." The steward immediately replied, "that from the great friendship he entertained for her, he would advance any sum she chose, and give her her own time to pay it." With many expressions of gratitude the old woman accepted his offer, and eagerly set about enlarging and new stocking

stocking her farm, delighted to have it in her power to raise her dear Helen to a better situation when she married, than she had before expected to have placed her in.

In the mean while Edward Roseberry, whom love made more quicksighted than his innocent mistress and her simple grandmother, began to be suspicious of the squire and his wily agent. He had heard the worthless character which the former bore in respect to women, and a consciousness of Helen's extreme loveliness, gave him a dislike to their so frequently visiting at the farm-house; for, though firmly confiding in her love and virtue, she was too artless he knew, to be a competent match for such a villain; and might fall, he feared, a victim to his arts and stratagems. Not daring openly to avow his apprehensions from the fear of offending Dame Primrose, whose partiality
to

to the steward and his master was evident, as the surest way of escaping their machinations, he pressed her to let the marriage take place immediately; but to this the good woman would not consent, being guided by the steward's advice, who persuaded her to delay it till she had realised a little more money for them. A motive so laudable, and meant for their benefit, Edward could not oppose, as it would appear like ingratitude, draw, perhaps, upon him her displeasure, and a refusal of Helen's hand; he, therefore, endeavoured, though much disappointed and uneasy, to reconcile himself to his lot. As the best plans will, however, often fail of success, Dame Primrose found that by enlarging her farm, she only enlarged her cares; for having no man to manage it for her, which was necessary, as it was so much more extensive than before, all her affairs went wrong; her cattle died, her crops were scanty and bad, and at the markets she

she was always cheated. Ruin was hastening on apace, and she blamed her folly for not being contented with the little farm she had managed so well, perceiving too late, that, by grasping at more than she wanted, she was likely to lose every thing, and be reduced to beggary with her poor grand-daughter, who would be the sacrifice of her imprudence and ill conduct. Her only hope rested on the steward, who, she flattered herself, would, from his professions, advance her some more money; but to her excessive consternation on proffering the request, he positively refused it, saying he should be glad of the sum he had already lent, being in great want of it himself.

Struck dumb at a conduct so different from what she expected, especially after his having been the cause of her misfortunes, by his promises and pernicious advice, she knew not how to act, nor was
there

there any other person to whom she could apply but the squire, and, after much deliberation, she at length went to him. But with what horror, what surprise was the good old woman overwhelmed, at hearing him offer to extricate her from her difficulties on no other terms but giving up the innocent Helen entirely into his power, which if she consented to do, he promised to settle an handsome annuity on them both for life. Petrified at such excess of baseness, she flew from him as from a serpent, and hastened to tell Edward Roseberry of his wickedness. Here, however, the squire had already secured himself from the consequences of his honest resentment; for she learnt that he had been that morning dragged from the cottage of his aged parents, carried before a justice of peace, where some witnesses being brought forward, suborned to swear falsely against him, that he was a riotous disorderly person; he had been sent for a soldier,

and

and was enlisted in one of the regiments going to the West-Indies.

This intelligence drove poor Dame Primrose almost distracted, convinced Squire Brandon was the occasion of it all, and she trembled at the necessity she was under of imparting to Helen the loss of her lover. Wretched and unhappy she crawled, rather than walked, home, where the first object her eyes encountered was the squire at her grand-daughter's feet, who was in tears. At her entrance he arose, telling her in a haughty tone, he should supplicate no more, as he found Helen as obstinate and perverse as herself, and that they had nothing more to hope, but should feel his severest resentment; and with these words, accompanied by a terrific frown, he left them to their own miserable reflections.

When he was gone, Helen threw her

arms round her neck, when she sobbed as if her heart was bursting, and it was not till she was somewhat recovered, that the latter had resolution to tell her the extent of her misfortunes, of which she was quite ignorant, as the squire had only hinted to her on her refusing his offers, that he would revenge himself on her lover, without mentioning in what manner.

A violent fever and delirium succeeded the cruel relation she received from Dame Primrose, and, whilst she was yet suffering under it, the barbarous steward, by order of his still more wicked master, came and seized on all their property for rent, and the money due to him, and had it not been for the charity of some of their benevolent neighbours, they must have perished for want in the street. During this period, a letter arrived from Edward, expressing the severity of his grief, at being torn from his
beloved

beloved Helen, intreating her to be constant to him, and to keep up her spirits with the hope, that if it pleased God to spare his life, their true love might one day be rewarded, and that he should have come home once more to see her, but could not get leave of absence, as his regiment was to embark in a few days. This letter, which contained besides many more vows of tenderness and constancy, was a great consolation to Helen when able to peruse it, which was not till he had left England, and she always wore it tied round her neck with a black ribbon. Her grandmother and herself went, soon after this, to live at the little cottage in the glade, where Ermina first saw them, spinning yarn, and pursuing other laborious employments for their support, with which they contrived (though the squire molested them no more, having left the country, where he was detested for his cruelty to them), to drag on a miserable

existence for two years, during which time they had never heard from Edward Roseberry. However, one evening, as Helen was seated at her cottage door, spinning yarn and conversing with her grandmother about days of past happiness, accidentally casting her eyes towards a road which led to the glade, she perceived, to her great surprise, advancing up it with hasty steps, the martial figure of a foldier. Such an unusual sight in that sequestered spot, made her heart palpitate with a thousand confused emotions, and an idea suddenly occured, which filled her breast with perturbation, that this foldier might perhaps be her long lost regretted lover. But when he approached nearer, oh Heavens, what can describe her feelings, as their lips uttered at the same instant, my Edward! my Helen! The joy of that moment repaid whole years of sufferings. They rushed to each other's arms, and Helen's senses fled with rapture,

rapture, on being clasped to the faithful bosom that had, unshaken, preserved its fidelity to her. When recovered from the excess of joy to which they had all been so long a stranger, Edward related his adventures, and produced several little presents he had brought home for his beloved girl.

They both found each other very much altered for the worse, the sorrows they had endured having dimmed the lustre of their youthful beauty; but as their love was not founded solely on external appearances, they reflected it was for each other's sake, and Helen viewed with delight the dark embrowned countenance of her Edward, knowing it was his attachment to her that had caused him to suffer danger, toil, and fatigue, whilst he beheld with fond increased affection her faded cheek, conscious that love for him had stolen the roses that used to blush there.

Their long and well tried fondness was

rewarded by an immediate union ; but, a few weeks after, his leave of absence being expired, they were once more obliged to separate, and as his regiment was under orders for foreign service, in the course of some months they suffered the misery of expecting no more to meet for many years. It was at that cruel instant of bidding each other adieu, that Ermina had beheld them, and felt so much interested in their behalf, and, now that she was so well acquainted with the history of this faithful, affectionate, and unfortunate pair, she eagerly wished to serve them, keenly feeling the deprivation of fortune, that prevented her following the dictates of her heart, which would have led her to form the happiness of Edward and Helen on a lasting basis.

Ruminating on their misfortunes and the unchristian-like revenge of Squire Brandon, she returned to the abbey very melancholy,

melancholy, endeavouring however to arouse herself, that it might not be noticed by Mrs. St. Austin, whose observation she fortunately escaped: for had she perceived it, she would have asked many questions, and Ermina must then have been obliged to relate the whole affair, which she was fearful of doing, having learnt from Dame Primrose that Mr. Brandon visited Mrs. St. Austin in town, with whom he bore a good character, the knowledge of his vices being confined chiefly to the village, where Helen and her grandmother had lived, as he glossed over his crimes with an hypocrisy it was difficult to penetrate; and Mrs. St. Austin, being a stranger to his libertinism, and not easily relinquishing the good opinion she had formed of any one, she naturally supposed she would disbelieve the story, blame her for attending to such artful tales, and, notwithstanding her charitable disposition, perhaps prevent her from rendering any assistance

assistance to these unfortunate people. She began likewise to entertain an idea that augmented her uneasiness, which was a suspicion infused into her mind, that this Squire Brandon was the same Mr. Brandon who was the intimate friend of Glencarnock, as the description of him given by Dame Primrose exactly answered to the latter, and she trembled, lest, by any luckless chance, he should discover her to be under the protection of Mrs. St. Austin, and ruin her most probably in her favour.

The next and following day after that, it rained so much and so incessantly, that Ermina found it impossible to revisit poor Helen, and was obliged much against her inclination to restrain her impatience to know in what state of health she was. But on the third day the weather was again fair, and she sallied forth towards evening, with a pot of jelly and some wine which she had procured from Mrs. St. Austin's house.

housekeeper for a poor young woman, who she said lay ill; and it being customary for her to seek out, at her lady's desire, objects of charity and relieve them, it was thought not any thing extraordinary. Ermina hoped that what she carried would be of service to the grand-daughter of Dame Primrose, and flew rather than walked to the glade, where the pleasure she always felt when employed in benevolent offices, which she thought would be beneficial, was damped at viewing the old grandmother, whose countenance denoted excess of sorrow, and, on her eagerly enquiring after Mrs. Roseberry, she answered in a desponding tone, that she was much worse and quite delirious. Ermina then asked, if she had sent according to her orders for a doctor, and Dame Primrose, to her extreme chagrin, replied she had not, disliking to put so good a young lady to such great expence, without hearing farther from her. Our heroine soon, however,

over-ruled her scruples, and ordering the doctor to be instantly sent for, saying she should wait till he arrived, went up stairs to see poor Helen.

She was sitting up in bed, singing a mournful air, which her grandmother said, she must have composed in her delirium, never having heard her sing it before. She had torn off her cap, and her long light hair, which grew in natural ringlets, floated over her shoulders, her dark blue eyes were raised towards heaven, and her small white hands clasped together. A vivid bloom played on her cheeks, as she sung her plaintive ditty, without changing her position till she had finished mournfully warbling, and then giving a deep sigh, she looked vacantly around. Ermina gently took hold of her hand to try if she would recollect her, and could not forbear weeping at beholding the pitiable and affecting situation to which this young and hapless

hapless girl was reduced. Her tears attracted Helen's attention, who looked wistfully in her face, presently after, saying, "You weep; you are not then the wicked Brandon, his heart's too flinty to shed tears, he wept not when he tore away my love. Ah, perhaps you know my Edward. He's beautiful as the sunbeams, when they sparkle on the crystal waters. But I shall see him again in the skies above, where no cruel Brandons can come to part us more."—She was silent some minutes, after this she began singing again her wild and mournful ditty, which was as follows:

Howl, howl, ye winds ! ye rains descend !

Ye mighty tempests fiercely blow !

Beneath the fleet the trees shall bend ;

Shrubs, wave your flow'ry branches low !

In storms and tempests, sharp despair

For ever loves alone to dwell ;

It seeks the mountains rude, and bare,

The rugged rock, the gloomy dell.

The scream of owls, the raven's croak,
 The leathern bat at ev'ning's close,
 Delight the heart with sorrow broke,
 And sad despair and endless woes !

She remained in a kind of stupor, when she had concluded, for nearly twenty moments ; then suddenly uttering a loud scream, she gave a look of horror, and cried out. " Stop, barbarous man, let not thy sword pierce the heart of him I love, he never wronged you, he is too good to hurt any one. Rather kill me if you will not spare him. But, fee, fee, 'tis too late. Oh! Helen, canst thou live?" and agonised by the phrensie fire of her heated imagination, she groaned bitterly, and went into strong convulsions. Though half dead with terror at a scene such as she had never before witnessed, Ermina lent all the assistance in her power to Dame Primrose to aid her in restoring poor Helen, and, in less than a quarter of an hour, the effects from the violence of the delirium subsiding, she lay on the bed almost motionless, her countenance pre-

presenting the image of death, the hectic glow having fled her cheeks, which were hollow and tense, and her skin of a livid paleness. As Miss Montrose was contemplating this sad spectacle with pensive, religious sorrow, the doctor was announced, who, she requested, would use every exertion for the preservation of Helen Roseberry's life, intreating him to be under no anxiety respecting the payment of his attendance, as he might depend on her defraying all the expences. She likewise begged he would candidly tell her if there were any hopes of recovery. After examining the patient, and being informed of the origin of her disorder, the doctor gave them great reason to flatter themselves, that the youth of the patient would surmount with much attention the violence of the disease; and that when the delirium was past, if she met with no new cause to agitate her, and did not again give way to excessive grief, she might most probably recover; but, could the uneasiness she
suffered

suffered for her husband be removed, there could be no doubt then of her perfect recovery. "And as for you, young lady," said the doctor, seeing her look very ill from the terror she had undergone, "I shall enrol you on my sick list, if you do not take more care of yourself; and give me leave also to say" (for he was a very good-humoured, benevolent man, and superior to the ideas generally formed of country apothecaries), "you must excuse my receiving any gratuity from you for my attendance on this poor young woman. Say not a word," he continued, seeing Ermina about to remonstrate, "I am an obstinate old fellow, and will not be contradicted; besides, you may still shew your benevolence in procuring nourishing and comfortable food for her, as she gets a little better, and we shall both be pleased in our own way." He shook Ermina by the hand as he said this, and went away, leaving her quite charmed with his philanthropy. When he was gone, she found it time for herself
to

to depart, and wishing Dame Primrose good-night, she pursued her lonely way to the abbey, thinking of what Doctor Melburne had said, that if Helen's anxiety for her husband was removed, no doubt could be entertained of her recovering. The night was dark and gloomy, no moon arose to cheer the scene, and the sombre shade diffused around, struck her with a solemn horror after the scene she had witnessed, which had weakened her spirits, and she felt a reverential awe steal over her, as scarce any sound caught her ear but the hollow noise of a water-fall which swelled and died away at intervals. The wind whistled melancholy through the trees, the bats fluttered their dusky wings, and the shriek of the owl struck her ear as the sad presage of poor Helen's death; till, oppressed and harrowed up with these mournful fancies, she was glad when she reached the park-gates, and snatched a glance of the gothic abbey rising among the trees.

CHAPTER II.

Oh Charity ! our helpless nature's pride,
 Thou friend to him who knows no friend beside,
 Is there in morning's breath, or the sweet gale
 That steals o'er the tir'd pilgrim of the vale,
 Cheering with fragrance fresh his weary frame,
 Aught like the incense of thy holy flame ?

BOWLES.

REFLECTING the next day on the pitiable situation of poor Helen Roseberry, it suddenly occurred to Ermina, that if her melancholy story was related to the colonel of the regiment to which her husband belonged, it might most probably, if he had any humanity, interest his feelings, and induce him to give the unfortunate soldier his discharge. Prepossessed with this idea, she considered what method she could best pursue to accomplish this benevolent purpose;

pose; and, after much deliberation, at length resolved to write a letter in behalf of this hapless pair, and, on her following visit to Dame Primrose, learn from her the colonel's name that she might send it to him. Impressed with an ardent hope of being serviceable to Helen and Edward Roseberry, and at all events certain that this plan could in no respect be injurious to them, she instantly began a most pathetic address, in which she described the misfortunes of the lovers, and their present affecting situation, in terms so moving and interesting, yet delineated with such elegant simplicity and conciseness, that it was impossible for any heart, not steeled against pity, to read this artless and melancholy narrative without a conviction of its truth, and feeling the utmost compassion. When she had concluded the mournful narrative (which, while she wrote, she had blotted with her tears), she placed it in her writing-desk, intending
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that it should remain there, till she returned the next time from visiting Dame Primrose and her grand-daughter.

Six weeks had already elapsed since her first residence at the abbey, and, during the last week of that period, she began to find her health visibly improved ; the contemplation of Helen's sorrows having driven from her breast for a short interval the recollection of her own, and an alteration in the manner of her occupying her time having likewise contributed in no small degree to this improvement. Mrs. St. Austin had lately taken a fancy to make her play almost constantly to her on the harp or piano-forte, and consequently the reading was greatly neglected, a circumstance extremely fortunate for Ermina, as the former employment did did not fatigue her as the latter had done, for she seldom sang, but played chiefly pieces of music. This agreeable change,
added

added to the regular hours observed at the abbey, the pure air which she breathed, and the kindness of her protectress, conspired to restore her strength and serenity of mind, and, ere a few months more had passed over her head, there was every prospect of her being as well as she had ever been.

When she next left the abbey to pay her accustomed visit to the glade, she felt animated with the hope of being beneficial to Helen, as the plan she had concerted for the restoration of her husband, would she flattered herself have a good effect, and be productive of mutual happiness to them both. Her pleasure was however damped at finding the poor girl rather worse than better, and, on enquiring the name of Edward's colonel, she learnt to her extreme mortification that she had entirely forgotten it. From Helen, who, it was probable, had a better memory, it
was

was impossible to gain any intelligence, as her delirium, though it had subsided, had made her head so confused, and left her so excessively weak, that her answers to any questions put to her were incoherent, and so totally unsatisfactory that Ermina, almost desponding, gave up the hope of saving her from wretchedness.

While she was in a melancholy mood, contemplating on her disappointment, she was interrupted by Dame Primrose, who said, "I've been thinking, my guid leady, that i've will goe minself to *Carlisle*, where my grandson's regiment is quartered. I can larn frae him his colonel's name, and then carry the letter to him: for i've have a guid neighbour that will teak as much care of Helen in mine absence, as I shou'll do mine own self, and you'll hae the guidness to call here to see how she coomes on." Charmed with this plan of the old woman's, Ermina set off with her to the
 abbey,

abbey, desiring her to wait in the hall while she fetched the letter, which she sealed up, and bringing it down to Dame Primrose with some money to defray the expences of travelling, she charged her at the same time to begin her journey early the next morning, and be sure to leave her grand-daughter under the care of a proper person, adding, that "if she acted otherwise she would quite lose her favour, as she had repeatedly told her not to mind any expence," and had promised to defray the whole. In obedience to those injunctions, the old woman left the glade at the time advised by Ermina, who indulged the pleasing expectation that her journey would be successful, impatiently awaiting the moments till her return, which appeared the more tedious, from her feelings being on the rack for Helen, who grew worse after her grandmother had left her. However, this state of painful suspense did not continue long, as Dame Primrose returned on
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the third day from her quitting home, and (by the orders of her benefactress, who flew with eagerness to meet her) came immediately to the abbey.

“ Weel and to be fartin,” said the old woman after a little circumlocution, “ I’ve found poor Edward looking very ill, and when I tould him my errand, he shook his head, giving me little hopes of success, as foldiers were much wanted just then. However, I’ve detarmined not to be danted, as I’ve tould him my young leady (meaning you, ma’am) desired me not to be, and finding that he got one of his comrades who was a guid scholard, to direct the letter, and when it was done, off he went with me to the colonel’s house, where he left me to get admittance by my own self, which I didn’t find much difficulty in doing, for the colonel (who is a lord besides) is one of the most affablest, good-tempered gentlemen (Heaven blest his

his soul!) that iver I see'd, and his farvents be the same: for Ise always heard say, that you may always tell the maister's disposition by his farvents. Nor niver did Ise see any thing to coome up to him for handsomenefs; sich a fine figure, tall and strait as the poplar-tree, and sich fine blue een that luiked so sweet, and shone as clear as the stars do on a frosty night, and all bedecked with scarlet and gold; why, Lord love ye, he looked like a prince! 'Set down, guid woman,' said he, when Ise gived him your letter; but for all his affableness, I know'd better behavior than to make so bold as to sit me down in a lord's presence. Weel, when he had finished reading the letter, he seemed to be in a mighty flusteration, and I was all of a trimble, being afeard he was angry. But I was nae long in that mind; for all of a sudden, he said to me, 'I feel very interested, Dame Primrose (for he had got my neame quite pat from the letter) in the fate of Edward Roseberry and

and his wife, and though sorry to part with him as he is an excellent fellow, shall certainly think of doing it, but not till I have some farther inquiries into the truth of the story ; and if I find it not to be doubted, you will hear shortly from me, in a manner which will give you satisfaction :’ and he then axed who the lady was that had written to him, and if Ise had known her long.

“ Weel, to make short of my story, as Ise found his lordship was such an affablest gentleman, Ise up and tould him all about it ; how Ise first caeme ’quainted with ye, and that ye wrote all the letter except the directions, which Edward got one of his comrades to due, as ye dident know his lordship’s name ; and Ise coudent help saying, at the same time, what an angel ye was upon ertth—so charitable, guid, and beautiful ; for Ise wa’nt the least dashed when I coome to spake to
his

his honor, as he wasn't proud a bit. Sae, after He had said my say, his lordship's honor put a guinea into my hand, saying, 'Keep up your spirits; guid woman, and tell the young leady, that she may depend upon every thing being settled to her wishes, as I doubt not the story being such as it is represented to me.' Upon this I made my best curtsy to his lordship, and went to Edward agen, who was ready to die of joy when I told him what had passed; for he said, his colonel's word was his bond, and called down a thousand blessings on your head, because ye had brought this about, not doubting to get his discharge after what his lordship had said, as there were witnesses enough to prove the ill usage Helen and himself had received from Squire Brandon. He then desired me to meake his best duty to ye, and to return ye meany thanks for the favours bestowed on him and his peer wife; thof he little bethought him how bad she

was; for, 'cording your request, I wad nae tell him how ill she was: for, as ye say, my guid leady, 'tis time enuff when he bees cooming home, for fartin, to let him know her danger."

Here the worthy Dame Primrose stopped to take breath, and gave Ermina an opportunity to express her pleasure at the good effect her letter had produced on Edward's Colonel, only inwardly regretting that the good woman's loquacity had led her to speak so much about her to a perfect stranger. But, on consideration, this appeared of little consequence, as most probably she should never see him; as he was not acquainted with her, and a stranger to her connexions; as she did recollect to have met with him any-where in the fashionable world; or, indeed, heard of Lord Bochon, which Dame Primrose said was his title. After some more conversation, the latter was dismissed with an injunction, that if her granddaughter

daughter had any interval of reason, she should cautiously inspire her with the hope of having Edward soon restored to her ; and promising, at the same time, to call very shortly, as she was anxious to know how the poor invalid continued.

For several days after this interview with the venerable cottager, Ermina was prevented from leaving the abbey, except to take a short walk in the park, by the arrival of some visitors, whom she was obliged to relieve Mrs. St. Austin from the fatigue of entertaining. Devereux and a Mr. Sevrancey were among the number of visitors who remained, the others staying but a few days ; and their continuing was highly pleasing to Ermina, as they amused the old lady, who, in consequence of this, engrossed less of her time, being partial to both gentlemen, and particularly delighted with the society of her nephew, notwithstanding he was so volatile and thoughtless. Sevrancey

was about three-and-thirty, and the intimate friend of Devereux, though so much his senior. His person was rather pleasing, but not in the least handsome or elegant; he possessed a mind well cultivated, an understanding naturally good, and so much wit and vivacity in conversation, that he was universally admired, and his company anxiously courted. This was the pleasing side of his portrait; for on the other was suspicion, want of feeling, artifice, and extreme haughtiness to all those who were not, like himself, endowed with the gifts of fortune. Never charitable but from ostentation, he yet wished to be considered, from vanity, as a benevolent character, though too sordid to be one in reality. Fond of flattery, impetuous in his temper, and proud and arrogant to inferiors—such was the real disposition of the man, which few of his friends came to the knowledge of; and even Devereux, intimate as he was with him, always imagined him to be a generous

nerous open-hearted fellow; for his specious appearance of liberality, frankness, and generosity, might have deceived every one but those who had a thorough experience of his character.

When Devereux first saw Ermina, he seized her hand, and, giving it a friendly shake, said, "Ah, ah, my little friend, are you not surprised at seeing me so much sooner here than I gave you reason to expect? But, to be candid, London was such a bore after you quitted it, that I have been wild ever since, till I could visit the old abbey, to witness the improvements vegetating in the country had made in your looks. But I had better have staid away, by G—, for you are grown so divinely handsome, that there is no standing it; and so many arrows pierce my heart from those bright eyes, that, unless you take compassion, I shall certainly expire at your feet." This good-humoured raillery made Ermina

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smile;

smile ; and, on her telling him that he ought to shut himself up in the most gloomy room in the abbey, and there study to correct his exuberant vivacity, he replied—" You suppose, then, my sweet Montrose, that this plan of yours will have the same effect on me as entering Trophonius's celebrated cave ; but be advised, do not persuade me to put it execution ; for you must allow it would be a great loss to society, to transform the gay, amusing Tom Devereux, whom all the world likes, into a grave fellow, with a face as long as my arm, solemn as an owl, and wearying every person he approaches with chopping logic and dry arguments." " Why, truly," said Ermina, " you are so good-natured, that I don't know any improvements that would make you more agreeable ; we must, therefore, endure your rhodomontades, and let you remain as you are." " My divine girl," rejoined Devereux, " this compliment is doubly valuable

able in coming from you, as it is the first you ever made me; on my knees I will thank you a thousand times for the favour you have conferred." "But I shall not stay," she replied, "to see you make yourself ridiculous;" and, escaping from him with these words, she placed herself by the side of Mrs. St. Austin; who smiled, as she generally did, at his gay, good-humoured sallies.

CHAPTER III.

I go to India's fultry clime,
 Oh never to return;
 Beneath some low embow'ring lime
 Will be thy soldier's urn.

REGINA MARIA ROCHE.

THE first moment Ermina could escape from the abbey, unobserved by its visitors, and with the permission of Mrs. St. Austin, she eagerly hastened to the habitation of Dame Primrose, impatient to be informed if any amendment had taken place in Helen's health. She found the good woman seated at the door, knitting; and her countenance, at seeing her, assumed an unusual expression of joy, which she immediately interpreted to be occasioned by a change for the better. Nor was she deceived

ceived in her conjectures ; for, two days before, Helen, after having awoke from a sleep of some hours, into which she had been lulled by an opiate of Dr. Melbourne's, was found, by her attendants, calm and composed ; and her grandmother, taking advantage, as she had been directed, of this interval of reason, imparted to her, by gentle degrees, the fortunate event that had occurred to restore her husband to her. From the time of receiving this intelligence, she began, though much reduced, slowly to amend, and was at present dozing. Dame Primrose entreated her benefactress to walk up and see her : but she declined it, being fearful of disturbing that repose so favourable to her, and sufficiently satisfied with knowing that she was recovering.

The evening was sultry, and Ermina, fatigued with her walk, and with a long ride she had taken in the morning accompanied by Devereux and Sevrancey, gladly sat down

by the side of the worthy grandmother, on a bench near the door, to enjoy, while she rested herself, the freshness of the air, though scarce a breeze moved the leaves of the trees, or agitated the smooth waters of a rivulet that transparent flowed along, and was distinguishable from the place where she was seated. It was, however, a much cooler situation than within the cottage; and a profusion of flowers that were planted in the little garden diffused a lively and refreshing fragrance. Poor Helen's spinning-wheel, which was visible from the door, caught her eye, and brought the melancholy reflection to her mind of the length of time that had elapsed since she was capable of using it. Suddenly it occurred to her that she should like to learn to spin; and turning to her companion, "Dame Primrose," said she, "I wish you would teach me how to spin." "Wi' aw mine heart, guid leady," rejoined the dame, "'tis a small feaver that ye ax. Ise war-
rant

rant I'll meake a rare spinster of ye"—and with these words she brought out the spinning-wheel and began to instruct her. She found her pupil prompt to learn; and in a little while she drew the yarn and turned the wheel with a great deal of dexterity for a beginner. Wholly engaged with her new employment, she heeded not any thing else; and the old woman's attention was equally arrested in watching the progress she made, and diverting herself with seeing her thus busy; nor could she help exclaiming, "Weel, weel, I sall meake bauld to say, that as ye be already the comliest, perfectest yong leadys thur auld een iver luiked at, sae wad ye also meake one of the prettiest country lasses that iver breathed; for ye luik sae innocent wi that sweet feace, now that ye be spinning. Ah, gen Ise were a duke, Ise shud soon know whare to seek a wife. Nae, dan't be blushen abuin it; for 'tis true as that I was bworn." Unconscious of her

own charms, which even excited admiration in the most insensible, Ermina continued her new employment diverted with the old dame's praises, considering them as a rustic attempt at flattery, with the hope of pleasing her.

A gipsy hat of the finest wove straw, tied with a lilac ribbon, shaded her lovely face, and a white cambric jacket and petticoat, with a cloak of the same, which she had thrown aside on account of the heat, was the whole of her simple attire, and gave her the appearance of an elegant paisanne, as, seated on the bench (round which the honeysuckle and jasmín entwined and crept up the white walls of the cottage), she plied her spinning-wheel, and plaintively sung an ancient ballad, perfectly in character with the simplicity of her present occupation. This amusement she would not, however, have indulged in, from the fear of disturbing Helen, had she not learnt that she was awake.

awake. In the midst of her singing an air softly melancholy, and sweetly harmonious, the old woman was called away to Helen, who wanted her ; and she had been absent but a few minutes, when hearing some one entering at the wicket, she naturally raised her eyes, and glanced that way. Hastily, however, and trembling, she declined them, the words she was singing died away on her lips in inarticulate murmurs, the blood forsook her cheeks, and scarcely could she believe the evidence of her senses, as, endeavouring to assume a careless air, regardless of the object before her, she continued her employment. This object, who had occasioned her so much consternation, was in no less agitation than herself, and stood motionless, regarding her with a countenance of melancholy and distress ; and this situation, so particularly painful to Ermina, would probably have continued a long time, as neither party appeared inclined to speak first, had not Dame Primrose interrupted

interrupted it by making her appearance. She curtsied down to the ground, and smoothing down her clean cloth apron, put on for the occasion, said, quite in a flutter, "Wad nat your lairdship's honor walk into my peer place, and rest yourself, whilst Ise get my grand-darter ready to wait upon your lairdship, that ye may see how ill she is. Ise did nae suspect your honor wad coome your own fell, or she shud have been ridy, but she is very peerly still, though, thanks to your honorable lairdship's guidness, she is restored to her senses, and likely to live." "My good woman," replied the nobleman, who was no other than Lord Henry, "I beg you will not trouble yourself, or inconvenience the poor young creature, as, convinced of the truth of your story, it is not necessary for me to see her now, and I only called, as I passed this way, to inform you that Roseberry shall have his discharge this day three weeks." "Heaven's blessing light on ye,

ye, my laird, for this guid news and kindness to us peer people!" said the grateful old dame, clasping her hands; "there is but one person living besides yoursell, that equalls you in guidness, and that is this dear young leady, whom Ise tould yer lairdship abuin, and we may truly thank her for the guid luck that has befallen us. Ah may ye baith be as happy as ye desearve, it will always be my constant prayer!"

These words, innocently uttered by the aged cottager, made Ermina experience the most unpleasant sensations; for they reminded her that the happiness or misery of herself and Lord Henry they had once hoped to have both had an equal interest in, and to have shared in the pleasures and misfortunes of each other. While these reflections crossed her mind, a sigh that stole involuntarily from him, made her imagine, that, notwithstanding past occurrences, their sentiments
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and feelings were still congenial ; but these thoughts were interrupted by Dame Primrose, who thus addressed Lord Henry :
 “ Now due let me get yer lairdship’s honor some refreshment. We have very fine cyder hard by, and Ise can get new bread, cream, and fruit of the best sort, which is all the fare us country folk can perduce, but instead of daintes I have a hearty wish to please ye.” To this Lord Henry made no objection, as he wished to have some excuse for staying ; and Dame Primrose bustled away to get all ready, leaving him alone with Ermina. He sat down by her on the bench and remained for a few minutes silent, apparently wanting courage to speak. This was so awkward and disagreeable to Ermina, that she almost instantly arose to depart ; but seeing her intention he aroused himself, and gently taking her hand, said, “ Is it possible, Ermina, that honoured as I once flattered myself I was, with your regard, you can now quit
 me

me without uttering a word?" "Ask your own heart, my lord," she replied with an assumed haughtiness; "and then tell me sincerely if I am to blame in not speaking to you, till first addressed, when your conduct has been so reprehensible." "Had you ever loved me madam, as you ought," he rejoined, relinquishing her hand and frowning angrily at her, "you would not have been so scrupulous; but it is not at this moment I learn how indifferent I have been to you for some time past; yet, fool, mean-spirited madman that I am, not all your infidelity and ill usage can eradicate the fatal passion you inspired, which has been my ruin, and which rendered me incapable of utterance, when I beheld you thus unexpectedly, and adorned with all those charms of beauty, simplicity, and truth, that first captivated my heart. Yes, wretched woman, you have been my destruction, blasted every prospect of happiness, and forced me to seek in battle an oblivion of
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my sorrows; as the fatal remembrance of your cruelty has denied me peace in this world. In a few months I quit England for ever: and in far-distant Eastern climes will bury all recollection of the falsehood and treachery with which you have requited my faithful love. Yet, injured as I am, feeble and transient is the resentment I feel for the daughter of Montrose; and grief for the failings of her who has disgraced him will often entirely banish anger. I therefore conjure you, faulty, but still beloved Ermina, by the affection you had for my dear and valued friend, your father, to return to those paths of honour in which he always walked, and, however painful the effort may be, regain your rectitude, and become what you have only the appearance of being, amiable and virtuous, and thus console yourself and your friends for the loss of your innocence, which is never to be recovered. You may likewise be convinced, if you will put
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me to the trial, that I will ever be your friend ; and in whatever distress, occasioned by your errors, apply but to me, and whilst I have life I will relieve it. I find you, as you ever were, benevolent ; and may the virtues, that used to accompany this one, be restored to your breast. It was not with the idea or hope of seeing you, that I came here, but merely to share with you in the happiness of relieving these worthy people : for reason tells me to avoid the sight of one so fatal to my peace ; whose heart having already ensnared me to think I was dear to her, may, if I run a second risque, once more delude me. Again, farewell for ever," he exclaimed, much affected, " most loved and dangerous girl, and sometimes think with remorse of the man whom you have cruelly injured."

Overcome with contending emotions, he was hastening away as he concluded this, had not Ermina, who had been silent all the

the time he was speaking, from astonishment and indignation, at accusations so false and unforeseen, which she perceived he construed into a tacit acknowledgment of guilt; and unable to endure leaving him in such an error, she said, in a faltering voice, "Stay, I beseech you, my lord;" and seeing him hesitate, she continued, "if ever my memory was dear to you, I intreat you to stay and hear me. That you should harbour suspicion after the explanation that took place between us in Devonshire, appears to me beyond belief; for having once made me suffer from your credulity, it is certainly unpardonable of you to err a second time. I have not much to say on the subject, because I feel myself perfectly undeserving of reproach, and know not who are my accusers; but in talking of injuries you totally mistake the affair, as it is myself, and not you, that is the injured person. I compassionate, however, the weak credulity of your disposition, notwithstanding the
 serious

serious consequence it has been to me, and wish that none but myself may have reason to regret it. Perhaps you will find a pleasure, which I should never have expected you would have enjoyed, in the reflection that you have insulted a woman you pretended to love with the most gross suspicions, nay, you even speak as if they were facts. But remember, my lord, that woman you have wronged had never cause to blush for any circumstance, except her too constant attachment to a man who accuses her of such depravity as she would rather die than be guilty of. Of this I am convinced, some secret enemy undermines my peace; but my most severe adversary is he, whom I have fondly cherished in my heart." "I would fain believe you innocent," replied Lord Henry, "and what you affirm overwhelms me with fresh doubt, but will listen no more; warned by those, who know you and your power over me, not to attend to your fascinating voice, which would, in defiance

defiance of reason and judgment, again seduce me ; and fly rather to embrace the unavoidable misery marked out for my future destiny, which the sight of you has made me for a moment forget, than ever more enable you to make me a convenient tool."

" Alas ! I see but too plainly," exclaimed Ermina, " the extent of my misfortunes. Not any assertions of mine will make you believe me innocent, and to combat with prejudices so rooted is quite useless. And now, Lord Henry, I take my leave ; yet the time I hope will come, though perhaps, we may never meet, when you will repent your too easy belief, but it will be then too late, as from this moment I obliterate all traces of you from my remembrance ; and be assured, that wounded pride and injured virtue will make the task far from difficult." She arose as she finished speaking, and resisted his efforts to detain

tain her, notwithstanding he made several, and promised to explain every thing; but, this she refused, saying it would answer no purpose, since he had positively judged her guilty, and vowed to place no faith in whatever she asserted. With a beating heart and quick step she therefore hastened from the cottage, but could not resist, when she had got a little distance from it, looking back to take a last view of him.

He was pacing the little garden with a wild disordered air, and hurried step. Her soul sickened at the sight; she burst into tears, and averting her head, pensive and unhappy pursued her way home. This unforeseen interview with Lord Henry Beauchamp (who she never could have suspected was Edward Roseberry's colonel from Dame Primrose's awkward manner of pronouncing his name) had dissipated for a time the dream of happiness into which her present tranquil situation had lulled her, and brought

brought her sorrows fresh to her memory. Yet she endeavoured to repel these gloomy images, for her bosom, swelled with indignation at his credulous belief of the scandal thrown on her character, so opposite to the conduct she should have observed herself; as she would have rejected any insinuations against him with the utmost disdain; and eagerly received his first attempt at exculpating himself. In this manner he ought to have acted by her, and from the opinion she had once formed of the generosity of his disposition, she expected it; but now she could in no shape excuse him. Miserable and dispirited, she entered the abbey, where she was obliged to join Mrs. St. Austin and the gentlemen, with whom she assumed a gaiety foreign to her feelings, and gladly hailed the hour of retiring to rest, which permitted her to throw aside the mask it was painful for her to wear, though extremely necessary, situated as she was, her protectress always liking to see young people

ple cheerful ; and Ermina, having frequently heard her express this, regulated her manners accordingly, making it a rule never to indulge melancholy in her presence.

She passed a better night than she could have expected after the scene that had occurred, and, summoning all her fortitude and resolution, rejected every intruding thought that would give pain to her breast, and went down to breakfast with a heart considerably lighter than the evening before. The newspaper was generally brought in with the breakfast, and it was Ermina's province to read it to Mrs. St. Austin, who preferred making the tea. After having read several paragraphs, she came to the following: "Lost off St. Helena, the ship _____, bound to the East Indies; almost all the crew perished; and, amongst several passengers" (whose names were mentioned) "who sunk with her was Mr. Zemin Linmore." On seeing his name, for that of the

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ship did not at first strike her, the paper dropped from her hand, and she grew so pale, that, apprehensive she would faint, Mrs. St. Austin dispatched Devereux for some hartshorn; and giving her some to drink mixed with water, and having bathed her temples and the palm of her hands, she recovered, and explained what they suspected, that it was seeing so unexpectedly the death of a friend in the newspaper, that had affected and shocked her. Misfortunes are frequently said never to come alone; and in life, if we make much observation, it will be found to happen very often, and Ermina found this common remark verified in the present instance; for, in addition to the sorrow she had the last evening experienced, she now learnt the untimely end of one of the worthiest characters she had ever known, and whose sincere attachment to her merited, as it had gained, her warmest gratitude. Of all the lovers she had ever had, none was so faithful and so disinterested

as this noble Indian. Neither selfishness nor vanity were mixed with his true and ardent passion, and he would have thought no sacrifice too great, that contributed to the happiness of the object he adored. Humbly conscious of the difference of complexion, never would he have dared to avow himself; and chance alone disclosed the painful secret. Many persons will probably say he could not act otherwise without the highest presumption, and consequently that in this conduct there was not any thing to admire; but they should reflect that there is scarcely a man (so prevalent is vanity in human nature) however ugly, deformed, or disgusting, but thinks he has pretensions to the most lovely of the other sex; and, whenever they meet with a refusal, impute it to a blindness in the lady, rather than to a want of merit in themselves. However, this self-conceit, which is perhaps a source of happiness to those beings, had no place in the breast Linmore, who,

though handsome, elegant, and with the sole objection of a dark skin, felt frequently unhappy at being of so different a colour from the people with whom he associated. Praised, caressed, and admired, for the politeness of his manners, and the gracefulness of his deportment, which gained him in all companies the appellation of the Prince, he yet felt humiliated and unhappy; and with a mind, therefore, of so much sensibility, it was a happiness for him to be snatched from a world, where appearances are only regarded, and true worth is rarely appreciated. Unfortunate youth! twenty summers had scarcely rolled over thy head, when, rich in every virtue and accomplishment, the watery bosom of the ocean inclosed thee, and left no memorial of thy worth, but in the breasts of thy sorrowing friends!

Ermina confined herself to Mrs. St. Austin's dressing room, for the remainder
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of the day, where she indulged her grief for the premature fate of the best of men. It was a sacred tribute she owed to his memory, and her benefactress respected her sorrows; not suffering her retirement to be intruded on, except to send up her meals, which were, however, returned untouched, her heart being too full to taste food; so severe were the effects on her mind, from the shock she received in learning his death, when wholly unprepared for it. She anticipated the regret that the elder Fairfields would feel for his loss, and longed to be with them, to participate in their grief. She had likewise lost with him the means of proving the false assertions that had been alleged against her to be void of truth, but this had no share in her sorrow for his death, as she trusted to Providence to elucidate her innocence.

The following day she joined the family
as

as usual, endeavouring to assume her accustomed cheerfulness; but her spirits drooped with the exertion, which was perceptible to Mrs. St. Austin, who admired her conduct in sacrificing her own feelings, that she might not infuse a gloom into other people, by appearing sad and dejected. Every tender attention this lady could think of she practised to alleviate her melancholy, and to prove how much she was pleased with her conduct; and, that she might not indulge reflection, to the prejudice of her peace, retained her with her the whole day. Late, however, in the evening Ermina took a walk in the park, while Devereux and Sevrancey were playing at billiards, and Mrs. St. Austin looking at them. She had waited for this opportunity of getting out alone, as they would have accompanied her, if she had attempted to have gone before they engaged in this amusement; and she did not wish for their society, not being at all disposed

posed to enjoy it, having longed all day for a moment in which she could indulge, undisturbed, in the luxury of thinking.

The moon shone bright and clear, each surrounding object seemed hushed in quietude, the zephyrs gently whispered through the foliage of the trees, and the silver rays of the queen of night, which had just risen from behind the hills, glimmered amongst the branches of the oaks, firs, chestnuts, &c. and threw a faint light on the dark rocks, craggy cliffs, and pointed tops of the fells. The cottagers, fatigued with their daily labour, had retired to rest, and seldom any voice or sound interrupted the still and awful serenity diffused around. Ermina, pensive and dejected, found the solemn sweetness and quiet of the scene in unison with her feelings; and, raising her eyes to heaven, sad remembrance dimmed their lustre with tears, and the pellucid drops fell fast upon her cheeks. She

blamed herself, as she wiped them away with a sigh, for giving way to this weakness, and strove to think on subjects opposite to those that had rent her bosom with anguish, but in vain; her thoughts involuntarily returned to the same channel, and, taking out her pencil, she leant against the broad trunk of an old tree, and by the light of the moon expressed, in these few lines, the anguish she felt at the unfortunate fate that had attended her valuable friend, the amiable and elegant Linmore.—

Thy wilds, Columbia, no more can boast
 A son like Zemin—polish'd, brave, refin'd.
 Ah! fancy paints thy gloomy, wand'ring ghost,
 Gliding the green wave, moaning to the wind.
 For thou wert born where clamours loudly ring,
 To call the Indian chiefs to deeds of arms;
 Midst deep'ning woods where adders deadly sting,
 And wild beasts prowl, creating dire alarms.
 Tho' dark thy colour, yet thy soul was fair,
 As is the snow-drop drooping in the dale;
 A tear for thee, poor hapless youth, I'll spare,
 While woes more poignant my swoln heart assail.

Tho'

Tho' on thy jetty face, no rose did blend
 Her glowing beauties with the lily's hue;
 Yet grace and elegance their charms did lend,
 And nature blest thee with a heart most true.

When dews fall heavy, when pale Cynthia's light
 Illumes the trees of yon embow'ring grove,
 Sighing I'll think of thee, while the whole night
 Pensively musing I delight to rove.

She had nearly concluded writing, when the abbey bell announced that it was time for her to return, and having made haste to finish her little poem, she walked slowly to the house, so much pleased with the uninterrupted calmness of her moon-light excursion in her present state of mind, that she was unwilling to quit it; but inclination must yield to prudence, she reflected, and soon returning to the abbey, she exchanged the sweet lustre of fair Cynthia's beams for the glare of candles, and her own thoughts were forgotten, in listening to the sentiments and conversation of others.

CHAPTER IV.

—“ O, love! how seldom art thou found
 Without annoyance in this earthly state;
 For haply thou dost feel some rankling wound,
 Or on thy youth pale poverty doth wait,
 Till years on years heavy are roll'd away;
 Or where thou most did'st hope firm faith to see,
 Thou meetest fickleness estrang'd and cold—

BOWLES.

LORD Henry returned to his regiment with sensations of misery, little less keen than those his lovely mistress experienced, though not aggravated as hers were by her dependent situation, which deprived her even of the melancholy consolation of mourning her griefs in solitude; yet, painful as it was for her to endure the society of indifferent persons, when her mind was
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overwhelmed with sorrow, she reflected, that, on the whole, it was probably much better for her to exert herself to overcome the despondence she felt, than by yielding to it, quite enervate her mind, and she was grateful for the numberless blessings she now enjoyed. Artfully as her lover had been worked on to believe her faithless and unworthy his affection, still his belief was staggered when she appeared before him, and avowed her innocence; and he almost ventured to think she had been injured by false representations, of which she was undeserving, and, whilst he wished to hear a confirmation of her innocence, he yet trembled and dreaded to hear it; for how culpable must he be if she was the same spotless, virtuous girl he had first known her; and how criminal must his unjust suspicions make him appear in her eyes, and cause him to entirely lose her esteem. Repeatedly did he blame the vehemence of his temper, reflect that

even were she guilty, he had insulted her with an unpardonable grossness, sufficient to make her hate him, and lamented, unceasingly, his having acted in so violent a manner instead of calmly addressing her, mentioning what he had to allege against her, and then listening to her justification. He recollected how much more nobly she had conducted herself towards him on a similar occasion in Devonshire, when she had listened to him with patience while he explained his error, then pitied and forgave him. Again whispered distrust, would not she, if guiltless, have explained, unasked, every event that had occurred to her since they last met; but this idea he rejected, for he remembered that he had in the most unfeeling terms, refused to give credit to any thing she should assert, and after such behaviour it was not to be supposed she would solicit to be heard, more especially as she was ignorant of what she was accused, as he had merely given her hints

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on the subject : he began now to be convinced, that, as she insinuated, it was his own credulous disposition that had created the abyss of misery into which he was precipitated. In a fit of resentment and wounded love, he had fold out of the guards, in which he had a colonel's commission, and entered into a regiment going to the East-Indies ; nor could the intreaties of Lord Darlington, or any of his friends, induce him to alter his resolution, life being indifferent to him, since he had lost her who alone made it desirable, and whom he could not cease to love with all her faults. But we must now proceed to relate the skilful arts practised to draw him into a belief, that, even if she had once loved him, that love no longer existed ; and the unfortunate train of circumstances, joined with the machinations of those who envied her evident superiority over them, and, therefore, conspired to ruin her happiness.

On

On that day when the interview took place between Lord Henry Beauchamp and Miss Montrose in the wood adjacent to Markham-hall, Mrs. Helderton's maid, Bridget, having been informed that gypsies were in the wood, was eager to have her fortune told, with the hope, like many other foolish vain women, that she should hear of some rich gentleman, or perhaps a nobleman, that was to be captivated by her charms; intending, if such was her lucky fortune, to discard Mr. Pompadour, whom she only kept in reserve in case no one else should offer to have her; for she was prudent, and thought it right to have, as she would often say, "two strings to her bow;" that, when one failed her, she might apply to the other. Unfortunately, however, for our heroine, she fixed upon the same time nearly for going to the wood, which she had chosen for her walk, and as the priory was at a greater distance than the hall from it, she arrived at the spot where Lord Henry and Ermina were

were standing, a few minutes before he threw off his disguise; and, when he discovered himself, they were both too much agitated to discern any thing that passed around them, as the gipsy, who had accompanied him, immediately on his advancing towards her, had retired to her companions as she had been instructed to do. Bridget having, therefore, looked around, and seeing no one near enough to detect her, planted herself behind a large oak, which sheltered her from observation, only peeping from behind it to gratify her curiosity. After having sufficiently amused herself in observing the lovers (for she instantly recognised Lord Henry from having seen him with her mistress), she flew home brimful of intelligence, and imparted all she had witnessed to her mistress, quite forgetting, in her eagerness to gossip, to have her fortune told; and, when she recollected the omission, resolved to go the next day instead.

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The account she received from her waiting maid, gave a malicious gratification to Mrs. Helderton, as she hoped to make it prejudicial to Ermina, whom she hated worse than ever, for having frustrated her views, and gaining a superior share of admiration. She was, likewise, charmed to hear from Bridget, that she was unhappy, as, should her schemes to defeat the fair orphan's smiling prospects, fail of success, she would yet have the ill-natured consolation remaining of knowing her affection for the first of her admirers, would make her indifferent to the other, and eventually destroy her felicity. Pursuant to her plans, she sent for one of the gipsies, from whom she learnt that Lord Henry had left the country, and she promised her a large sum of money, if she would declare, when called upon by her, that she had seen Lord Henry and Ermina meet very frequently in the wood, and that she had often delivered letters to them from each other,

and

and that the latter received, and returned answers to those of her lover's, when she walked out, with other circumstances not to be mentioned now. This done (as it was the same gipsy Lord Henry had confided in, and Bridget remembered to have seen him conversing with her), she resolved to set off for London almost immediately after the Assops, contrary to her former intention, which was to remain in the country, and there bury her chagrin at a marriage so unpropitious to her wishes, and which she could then devise no feasible scheme to prevent. When she arrived in town, Glen-carnock, who was her intimate acquaintance, called upon her, and after some desultory chat, said, "Have you been in Park-lane yet? what a d——d fine girl the Assop's have got with them! but c——d haughty, upon my word. Do you know she would hardly speak to me when I saw her last! I think it is giving herself great airs to a man of my merit. By God I should

should like to pull down her pride!" Mrs. Helderton, delighted to hear he was offended with her, agreed with him that she was a proud creature, who deserved to be humbled for her vanity and airs, endeavouring to exasperate him violently against her, as she wished to make him useful to her; in which plan she succeeded so well, that before they separated, he vowed to execute whatever she desired, that would be injurious to Ermina.

As Sir Charles Melross was reading the newspapers one morning in a coffee-house, two gentlemen entered presently after him, and seating themselves near enough for him to hear their conversation, began talking on different subjects. The shortest of the gentlemen, who was no other than Glencarnock, Sir Charles knew by sight, but to the other he was a perfect stranger; and being engaged with the papers, he paid no attention to what they said, though they spoke rather

rather loud ; till they began speaking of different characters, and Glencarnock, who had a great deal of wit, made so many appropriate and keen remarks, retailing, likewise, such a number of curious anecdotes of the fashionable world, that he was insensibly drawn to listen to him, and was much diverted. He soon, however, became considerably interested, when he heard Glencarnock, suddenly addressing his companion by the name of Stewart, ask him if he knew Sir Charles Melrofs. Stewart answered in the negative. “ Nor I neither,” rejoined the other ; “ but I hear he is a noble fellow, and am sorry for him ; for the lady he is going to marry, it is said, will place a pair of antlers on his brows. I don’t doubt the truth of this, as I have it from good authority ; and besides my opinion of the sex is not very high ; and as it is certainly known that she is warmly attached to another gentleman, ’tis not surprising. Lord Henry Beauchamp is the
favoured

favoured lover, and she only marries poor Sir Charles for the convenient purpose of patching up her reputation, as the Earl of Darlington, her lover's father, will not give his consent to such an unequal match, and Lord Henry does not choose to risque his displeasure for a wife, as, by all account, he has his reasons—a cast off mistress—you understand me, and I think he is quite in the right.”

Sir Charles, whom this discourse rendered immoveable for some minutes from astonishment and rage, at hearing the woman he loved thus publicly traduced, recovering himself, got up, walked to Glencarnock, and telling him his name, desired him, with great politeness, to walk into the street, as he wished to speak to him unheard by any of the company in the room. The latter pretended to be very much astonished at the discovery, and immediately attended him, accompanied by

Stewart.

Stewart. When they were in the street, Sir Charles thus addressed him: " My name, Mr. Glencarnock, must inform you that any scandalous aspersions thrown on the character of Miss Montrose, I shall warmly resent; and if you do not prove to me that you are not the author of what you advance in my hearing, I will tell you, you are a dirty scoundrel, and as such I will proclaim you through the world, and severely chastise you for your daring and wicked impudence." Not in the least daunted, the subtle villain replied, " Mrs. Helderton, Sir Charles, is the principal source from which I have derived my information; but several other persons have mentioned the subject to me, and, amongst the number, I particularly recollect, the Earl of Darlington and Baron de Belmont." " You shall instantly attend me to this lady, and afterwards to those gentlemen," rejoined Melrose. Glencarnock, quite cool and collected, assured Sir Charles he pardoned his behaviour, as he knew

knew the anger a man in love feels if the honour of his mistress is questioned; and whatever he alleged wore such an air of sincerity, that the latter scarcely doubted him (notwithstanding his character was so much despised about town), and charitably imagined he might be wrongfully calumniated, as well as many others, with whom the world are too busy, more especially if they are noted for either great beauty or great deformity of person.

But Sir Charles judged him with more candour and lenity than he deserved, as what had passed was entirely a plot of his and Mrs. Helderston's, in which Lord Darlington and the Baron de Belmont were also implicated. It was at the former's house that she had seen Lord Henry, and became enamoured of him, and learnt from the baron his attachment to Ermina Montrose, which gave rise, in her malignant breast, to that hatred which she afterwards felt for
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that unfortunate lady, and which was increased by her likewise inspiring Sir Charles Meltrofs with a passion for her, to whose rank and fortune she had aspired, though to Lord Henry she was alone attached, whilst he, to her utter chagrin, was insensible and careless of all her coquettish arts, which was very mortifying to the Earl of Darlington, who gave him to understand that it would please him, to encourage her forward advances, as she was of good extraction, and her fortune extremely large; but, after having loved Ermina, she was of all other women the greatest contrast to her, and consequently the least to his taste. Mrs. Helderton, finding herself without hope in this quarter, was artfully and constantly contriving to irritate the earl with fictitious stories of his violent attachment to Miss Montrose, with whom he was on the eve of marriage, and so completely enraged him, that he was eager to join in any plot to effect her ruin, as the former represented
to

to him, that should she even marry Sir Charles, with whose engagements to her he was acquainted, he might be assured a divorce would be the consequence, and that she would then marry Lord Henry. She, therefore, advised (as being the only method to crush this upstart) to make her quite fall in the opinion of both these gentlemen, and then let her quietly return to her original poverty and obscurity, Mrs. Helderton having described Colonel Montrose to him as an adventurer of low birth and connections, who had assumed a name to which he had no claim.

Lord Darlington, who has been before represented as vindictive, proud, and selfish, readily now assented to join in any schemes that were to cause the destruction of an innocent unoffending girl; having no scruples when he was to accomplish any thing favourable to himself or family. The wily de Belmont was, likewise, to aid them
when

when necessary, although he had owned to Lord Henry the falsity of what he had been prevailed upon by the earl to allege against her ; but he had then acted from policy, as he saw he must either confess the truth, or, from Lord Henry's impetuosity, fight him, as he was convinced of her innocence from the recital of Terefe. The baron, however, easily swore the enraged lover to secrecy on the subject, except to his mistress, as his father was the instigator of the deception. Sir Charles Melrofs was, he was certain from the delicacy of Lord Henry's honour, quite ignorant of this affair, and, independent of it, the approaching nuptials would prevent its being divulged to him, or any acquaintance taking place between them, and he fancied himself secure to act as he pleased.

Mrs. Helderton was a particular object of dislike to Sir Charles ; as in many instances, before he had made Ermina the

offer of his hand, she had shewn how envious she was of her, and afterwards endeavoured to disguise it under the semblance of kindness and friendship. This obvious neglect, and then mean deceit, had thoroughly disgusted him, and he shewed her little attention, though she had once been his favourite cousin, as he thought her good-natured ; but her ill-treatment of Ermina had drawn aside the veil, and he attended Glencarnock and Stewart to Portman-square, where she resided at present, with a firm resolution to disbelieve every word that she said, convinced that envy had induced her to traduce Miss Montrose. When they entered her house, they were shewn into the drawing-room, where they found Mrs. Helderton stretched on a sofa, playing with her lap-dog. " Ah ! my dear coz," said she, jumping up, " what has procured me the favour of this visit ? and how came you so accompanied ? I did not know that you and these gentlemen

men were acquainted." "I may thank you, madam," he replied, "for the introduction; as it was the freedom with which Mr. Glencarnock spoke of Miss Montrose, and said your conversation authorised it, that made me form any sort of acquaintance with him or his friend." "Good God, Sir Charles, I had not the smallest idea that either of you would ever meet, or I had never hazarded a word on the subject; convinced from your attachment to the lady, that whatever I advanced relating to her would be attributed to envy, and a thousand other such pretty causes, of which you men are so good-natured as to accuse our sex. But Heaven is my witness, that I only repeated what I have heard and seen, without any design to injure her; nor should I have ventured that, but from Glencarnock's teizing me with a thousand questions, owing to something he heard at Lord Darlington's, from whence I had myself the chief of my information." "Very

well, madam," said Sir Charles, "let me hear all you have to say; and do not, from a fear of wounding my feelings, palliate any circumstance."

"I will satisfy you, then, Sir Charles:—Glencarnock called here, a few mornings since, and, after some unconnected conversation, said to me, 'Faith the girl Sir Charles Melrose is going to marry is a girl of spirit; he'll catch a tartar, but a d——d pretty one. I hear at Lord Darlington's, that she has committed two *faux pas*—that she went abroad with a French nobleman, and then intrigued with Lord Henry Beauchamp. There was a c——d deal more said about her, which I have forgot; but come, let's hear your opinion; you know I'm fond of a bit of scandal; tell me if you think it true.' I assure you, Sir Charles, I was very averse to speak on the subject. Now, is it not true, Glencarnock?" He asserted that it was; and she

she continued—"He, however, urged me so unceasingly, that I was foolishly tired of contending, and endeavoured, by what I said, to soften the account he had heard; which I had, likewise, from the same quarter, but with still greater aggravation. I confessed to him that it was certainly a fact, that Miss Montrose had a very tender attachment to Lord Henry Beauchamp, which he returned; and that it had commenced when they were on the continent; but that nothing ill-natured was to be inferred from that, as it was natural for a young lady when disappointed by the severity of her lover's father of an union with him, to accept the first good establishment that was offered to her. As for her deviating from virtue, I assured him I believed it to be a groundless accusation."

A flush of indignation mounted to the face of Sir Charles, at the bare idea of having been made a convenient dupe; but,

striving to suppress his emotions, he only repeated, that he had changed his mind, and, instead of troubling the gentlemen to accompany him, should call alone at Lord Darlington's, in the course of the day; but entreated that Mrs. Helderton would explain more clearly what she had only hinted at. "I am sorry," she replied, "to explain myself before Glencarnock and Stewart; but as they already know so much of the affair, it is of little consequence that they should know the remainder; and we must trust to their discretion to let it go no farther. However, I will summon Bridget to explain what I mean, as it is rather her story than mine. Mrs. Helderton rang the bell, and on the footman making his appearance, desired him to send Bridget to her; and, presently after, the waiting-woman made her appearance. "Bridget," said her mistress, "tell these gentlemen what you know of Miss Montrose." "Lauk, mem," she rejoined, curtsying,

curtſying, and pretending to look very diſtreſſed—"I dant like to ſpake about it, becauſe as how, I be afeard it will be an injury to the young lady's character; and I ſhould be ſorry to ſpoil a young lady's fortune in marriage; and ſuch a pretty lady, too, that never did me any harm."

"Bridget," ſaid her miſtreſs, in a pretended paſſion, "I inſiſt that you tell theſe gentlemen all that you have told me, or I ſhall think it is your own invention; and it will be imagined that I have invented theſe falſhoods." "Oh, mem, for far-tin I ſhudn't like you to be 'ſpected of any ſuch thing, owing to my tattle; for what I have told is as true as that I now ſtand in your ladyſhip's preſence." Then, affecting to be in a flutter, and twirling the ſtring of her apron, ſhe began to relate—having ſeen Lord Henry and Ermina in the wood, when ſhe went to have her fortune told; that ſhe ſaw them embrace very affectionately; and that a gipſy told her they

met very often, Lord Henry wearing different disguises ; and that she frequently carried letters backwards and forwards for them, to each other ; and lurked near Sir John Aslop's house, with messages from his lordship ; and owned that she supposed them privately married, as she had once watched, at midnight, about Markham-hall, while Lord Henry, by a rope-ladder, ascended to the bed-chamber of Miss Montrose ; and that she expected and hoped to be again employed on the same service, as my lord paid very handsomely, and they were both such generous good gentlefolks, that she wished they might not be obliged to keep their marriage a secret much longer ; for they had informed her, the concealment of it was caused by a stingy old father, who wanted his lordship to marry a rich lady that he hated." Bridget said, that " to her shame be it spoken, she was very curious concerning this affair ; and, as the gipsy was fond of gossip, asked her

her when she thought the gentleman would meet his wife again. She answered, that she could not positively tell, but thought it would be on the following Wednesday ; and, in consequence of this information, the waiting-maid watched them, and found all that the gipsy asserted to be quite true ; but it was too dark for her to distinguish the gentleman's face, though his figure exactly corresponded with Lord Henry's. The day after," continued Bridget, " she informed her mistress of the discovery she had made, and could with difficulty make her believe it ; but not liking to have her word doubted, she enquired of the gipsy when the gentleman and lady were to meet again ; and having learnt the exact time, persuaded Mrs. Helderton to accompany her to the wood, and, concealing themselves behind a tree, they saw Lord Henry meet Miss Montrose, disguised as a gipsy, and afterwards throw aside his disguise." This was all, Bridget said, she knew of the

matter ; and supposing them to be man and wife, she thought there was no harm in it ; but when she heard that the lady was going to be married to her mistress's cousin, Sir Charles, she was very much surpris'd ; and considered the behaviour of Miss Montrose as being very false-hearted to both her sweethearts ; and that she could not be married to Lord Henry. Bridget concluded her relation with many lamentations at being obliged to speak ill of another person, who had never offended her ; and that she would never have done it, notwithstanding it was the truth, but (to use her own words) " that no slur might be thrown on her's and her dear lady's character."

The countenance of Sir Charles had, during this recital, varied from pale to red, and he felt shocked and amazed ; but, although the manner of Bridget's giving her account wore so much the appearance of

of simplicity and truth that it was hardly to be doubted, he told Mrs. Helderton he would not believe a word of it, unless the gipsy was confronted with her waiting-maid; and requesting the gentlemen to keep the affair as secret as possible, and telling Mrs. Helderton he would call on her the next morning, he left them with her, to visit Lord Darlington, there to receive a stronger or weaker confirmation of what he had too fatally been made acquainted with.

No sooner was his back turned, than the amiable trio burst into a loud laugh at their excellent success in duping him: for they quickly perceived that suspicion and the green-eyed monster jealousy were gnawing at his heart, and, hugging themselves with joy for having succeeded in their malevolent schemes, they sent for Bridget, whom they praised exceedingly for having acted her part so well. Whilst they were de-

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delighted

lighted with the reflection of their successful wickedness, Sir Charles was adding, at Lord Darlington's, fresh anguish to his wounds, by hearing that nobleman express the utmost contempt and detestation of Ermina, assuring him he had no doubt of her being devoid of virtue and principle, and possessing the most extreme art; and that he would sooner see his son dead than united to her who was already his mistress. The Baron de Belmont was with him, and strengthened these assertions; saying, likewise, that he had witnessed her improper conduct in France, with de Valcour and Lord Henry. The testimony of personages so respectable, corresponding with what he had already heard, rendered him almost frantic; the scandal of women he might doubt, but to doubt them was impossible; and he returned to Park-lane in a state of mind which even his enemies might have pitied, and finding Ermina alone in the drawing-room, behaved as was described.

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In the morning, being still willing to hope he was deceived, he flew to Mrs. Helderton's, and entreated she would send for the gipsy, if she was to be found; and, in compliance with his wishes, Bridget and his valet Robert were dispatched in search of her, with orders to mind no expence, but bring her instantly; it being absolutely necessary, as the marriage was so near, to make the truth of what he had heard ascertained. During the interval till her arrival, he continued to conduct himself towards Ermina in a manner that appeared to her and her friends very extraordinary, as they were ignorant of the poison infused into his mind by Mrs. Helderton, with whom he was now very frequently, as he had no other confidant to whom he could unburthen his mind, being persuaded by her, against his inclination and judgment, not to tell Ermina what he had heard against her. Her artifices, therefore, prevented any explanation taking place, and she soon gained

gained such a complete ascendancy over him, that he blamed himself for ever having judged disadvantageously of her; imputing her cold treatment of Miss Montrose to having seen and known those faults and weaknesses in her character, which love had made him too blind to discern.

In a short time the gipsy arrived; and, on her examination, she gave so clear an account, and so exactly corresponding with Bridget's, that Sir Charles (who was too good to suspect human nature to be capable of such wicked machinations and unprovoked treachery as were evinced by Mrs. Helderton) thought it was impossible any longer to doubt such strong evidence of guilt, and resigned himself to despair; for honour and pride would not suffer him to marry a woman who would have dishonoured and made a complete dupe of him; and he resolved to punish her deceit by disappointing her at the moment when she expected her

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her good fortune to be fixed, and her reputation saved by a marriage with him. Nevertheless there were moments when he doubted his own judgment, and was tempted to confess every thing that passed to her; but her evil genius, in the form of Mrs. Helderton, interfered and forbade her happiness. It was in one of his most unfavourable states of mind towards Ermina, that he saw Lord Henry (whom he personally knew) at the theatre; observed their mutual agitation at the sight of each other; and attributed her fainting to seeing him before in the house, and not to being affected at the play; concluding she could not see without emotion her first lover, when so near (as she supposed) being married to another. His rage and jealousy exceeded all bounds, and the gnawing flame was fanned by Mrs. Helderton; who would not have been quite so eager to increase it, had she foreseen the consequence, which was endangering the lives of both
the

the gentlemen; for, knowing that Sir Charles disclosed all his thoughts to her, she little suspected that he had concealed his intentions of revenge, from the fear that if he had told her, she would have done something to prevent him.

After some deliberation, he sent Lord Henry a challenge, which the other accepted with indifference, as he cared very little whether he lived or died, since he was about to be deprived of the woman he loved. But he was rather surpris'd, that Sir Charles, on the eve of his approaching happiness, should choose to risque his life, as the charge he brought against him was groundless, and almost unintelligible to him; for such he considered what he alleged in his note to be, wherein he accused him of duplicity of conduct, with having meditated his dishonour, and destroyed all his prospects of happiness. Sir Charles, the evening before

fore he was to meet his rival, felt (notwithstanding his anger and jealousy) affected, when Ermina retired for the night ; and reflecting that he might, perhaps, never see her more, if his antagonist had better fortune than himself, he found he was unable to resist those emotions which surprised every one present, whilst the luckless object of them little suspected they were a prelude to the misery that awaited her.

Lord Henry and Sir Charles met, as had been appointed, at an early hour; but, previous to their firing, the former for his own satisfaction attempted an explanation to exculpate himself; but, prejudiced and furious with jealous rage, the other refused to hear him, and taking their stands, on the second fire, Sir Charles fell, almost without signs of life, the ball having entered his side. Shocked at a catastrophe unsought for by him, to whom no blame could

could be attached, he sent his servant for a surgeon, who gave faint hopes of his recovery. Lord Henry, therefore, by the advice of his friends, set off for the Continent (as both Sir Charles and himself had neglected to have seconds), there to wait the event of this unfortunate affair. Mrs. Helderton was the first person who received intelligence of the duel; and she hastened to Park-lane, not to console Ermina, but to prejudice Sir John and Lady Assop against her; and, having ordered Bridget to work upon the simple and credulous mind of Fanny, by accusing Miss Montrose of the most infamous conduct, afterwards induce her, by her insolence and impertinent insinuations, to leave the house; for she knew her exquisite sensibility would not suffer her to remain where she was despised and insulted, though undeserving of it; for a consciousness of innocence does not prevent a feeling heart from

from being wounded by calumnious aspersions, and low-bred malevolence.

Her schemes had the effect she desired; and by keeping Ermina from seeing Lady Assop, she prevented her from defending herself, and her quitting the house in that clandestine manner, was a tacit confession to them all of her guilt, averse as they were to believe her unworthy, and unwilling to credit Mrs. Helderton's assertions, that she was gone off with Lord Henry, and seen by an acquaintance of hers in a post-chaise with him. But, had she been innocent, they recollected she would most certainly have attempted to justify herself, and not have left them without expressing some gratitude for all their kindness to her. After they had formed this opinion, and learnt her flight with her lover, all inquiries after her were dropped, and her name seldom mentioned by the Assop family, for they had entertained a great regard for her; charmed

charmed by her apparent virtues and sweet disposition, and felt much shocked at being so much deceived. Sir Charles, contrary to the expectation of every one, recovered, and as the same story was repeated to him, he was equally repugnant to converse on the subject, for he still loved her; and Mrs. Helderton saw with vexation indescribable, that increased her rancour to Ermina that, although she had injured her so severely, she had not advanced her own interest with her lover, who still continued to adore that (as he thought) faulty girl. But she persevered without remorse in her iniquitous schemes, with the latent hope of drawing advantage from them at some future period; and at all events, consoling herself with the fiend-like pleasure, that, if she should be totally disappointed in one or two instances, she had yet been successful in making Ermina wretched, and destroying her fair prospects of felicity. Mrs. Heywood and Lady Julia Vernon, surprised at not hearing from,

from, or seeing Ermina, which the account of the duel, and consequent delay of the marriage, led them more anxiously to expect, made each of them a thousand inquiries of Lady Assop, who was then obliged to relate all that had passed, which overwhelmed them, as friends of Miss Montrose, with the greatest uneasiness for her fate, as they knew not what to think of her acting so differently from her general conduct, in forsaking the house of Sir John Assop in the abrupt manner she had done; but they did not hesitate, notwithstanding, to determine that at some future time she would make her innocence appear, and clear up the mystery that at present enveloped her. Sir Charles, when he grew better, was advised to recruit his health with the pure air of Wales, and the Assops, from attachment and compassion, accompanied him there.

In the mean while Mrs. Helderton, who
truly

truly knew the innocence of our poor heroine, and that she was not with Lord Henry, endeavoured by every means in her power to discover her retreat, that she might again molest her. For some time all her inquiries were ineffectual, till Glencarnock, through the means of Sir Patrick O'Neil, fatally found her out, when she abetted and assisted the former, Madame Daufeuille being in the secret, with money and advice to carry on his diabolical schemes, in concert with Brandon, to destroy the peace of mind of Ermina, as not any thing would have gratified her malice so completely, as to have frightened her into a marriage with that contemptible wretch Glencarnock. But Providence in its goodness defeated their wicked intentions, and, being obliged to go for some months on a visit to her father, who was in a bad state of health, and worth a great deal of money, her spirit of revenge lay for some time dormant, and Glencarnock,

tired

tired and disgusted with ill success, dared not venture to injure Miss Montröse, but by that dangerous weapon his tongue.

On her return to town, Mrs. Helderton learnt from Glencarnock the agreeable situation Ermina enjoyed with the Fairfields, and how well she was received in company from being introduced by Mrs. Ballendan. This intelligence her malice could not endure, and she determined to destroy the peace she enjoyed; after having seen her in the carriage with Mrs. Elizabeth Fairfield, she made several visits to Mrs. Ballendan in the company of a lady who was slightly acquainted with her, and contrived, as if undesignedly, to give such a horrid character of Ermina, relating all the falsehoods she had invented of her, with the addition of her being the mistress of Zemin Linmore, and that he imposed her as a virtuous woman on the worthy old quakers, that the proud and unsuspicious

Mrs.

Mrs. Ballendan stood aghast at the relation; and, when she again saw Mrs. E. Fairfield, expressed her anger at having been introduced to such a character by her, and disgraced herself by appearing with her in public. Provoked and mortified, Mrs. E. Fairfield, who had not much understanding, easily credited this unfavourable account, and apologised by saying, it was her father and mother-in-law who were to blame for taking such a suspicious person under their protection, and introducing her to her notice as a woman of virtue; and returning immediately home, she informed them of what she had heard, and insisted that Ermina should be made to leave them directly. The worthy Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield were very angry with their daughter for attending to such scandal, which they were certain was without foundation, and said they should be excessively displeased, if, by her conduct or any other method, she gave

Miss

Miss Montrose the least intimation of what she had been told, for they were thoroughly convinced of her innocence by what she had thought proper to relate of her story to them. But these injunctions were little attended to by Mrs. E. Fairfield, as she continued obstinate in her opinion of Ermina, persuaded her husband to think the same, and so much embittered the happiness of her father and mother, that it induced the innocent occasion of it (as is already known) to leave them, rather than be productive of so much unhappiness to her benefactors, who had gained her warmest gratitude by their friendly kindness when she was destitute of every other friend.

The good quakers were overwhelmed with chagrin, when they found she had departed, and learnt from her letter the occasion of it; and they would have thought no sacrifice too great to have had

her restored to them, so much were they convinced of the purity and integrity of her heart, whilst her resemblance both in person and sweetness of manners to their lost daughter, had inspired them with an affection almost equal to that they had felt for their beloved child. They exerted themselves, but unavailingly, to discover her retreat, and were miserable at the thoughts of what she had to encounter, when she should have expended the small trifle of money their bounty had bestowed; and, being again thrown unprotected on a merciless world, be liable to receive a repetition of those insults, and that ill usage that had destroyed her health and peace. Finding every effort to discover her unsuccessful, they expressed the utmost indignation against their son and daughter, for having, by their ill treatment, caused her flight, and left them in evident displeasure; when they returned to their retirement in Hertfordshire, where they mourned unceasingly

ceasingly the loss and misfortunes of their beloved Ermina Montrose.

While all these circumstances passed, Lord Henry, from the information he received of his rival's recovery, returned, after some months' absence, to England, with spirits very much depressed, as he dared not hope, notwithstanding the duel, that the engagement subsisting between Sir Charles and Ermina was dissolved, as he had heard nothing relative to their estrangement from each other. Anxious to learn some intelligence of her, he sent his servant to make inquiries in Park-lane, but could not gain any satisfactory account, the family being all in Wales, and only an old woman left to take care of the house, who was ignorant of every thing relating to Miss Montrose. Disappointed, he went to Lady Julia Vernon's, where no better success attended him, for Lady Julia was married to Mr. Desmond, and

had set off with him on a tour to Italy. After reflecting some time with whom else Ermina was acquainted, he recollected Mrs. Helderton, and being a perfect stranger to her dislike and enmity to Ermina, he immediately bent his steps to Portman-square, and, fortunately finding she was in town, he left his card, and said he would call on her the next morning to enquire after Miss Montrose.

Mrs. Helderton was thrown into the greatest agitation by the expected visit of Lord Henry, convinced that if she informed him that no engagement now subsisted between Ermina and Sir Charles, he would instantly seek her out, and again offer her his hand. This she dreaded, even more than an union between her and Sir Charles, as it would completely frustrate her revenge, which led her to prevent her marrying either of these two lovers, though she could even more patiently endure her marrying

rying Sir Charles than Lord Henry, as she knew she tenderly loved the latter, and by an union with him, would not only enjoy a superior title and fortune, but, what was more valuable than all, would be united to the man of her choice. On the contrary, she knew, that with Sir Charles, though possessed of riches and luxury, the remembrance of her first lover would embitter her happiness: as her heart was too susceptible to easily forget its earliest attachment. Lord Henry Beauchamp (as has been before mentioned) had inspired Mrs. Helderton with a violent attachment, which she, however, prudently confined to her own, and maid Bridget's breast, as she saw no prospect of having it returned, from his love to Ermina; and it was solely from the defeat of her hopes in that quarter, that she turned her thoughts towards the fine estates of Sir Charles, who, though an agreeable elegant man, had a plain face, and was not so much to her taste as his

handsome rival, who surpassed every other man, not only in her opinion, but in that of every female. When he called the next day, she was prepared with a story to receive him; and instantly, on his mentioning the subject on which he came, she burst into tears, and so naturally lamented the unfortunate fate of his loved Ermina, who, she informed him, had, from the cruelty of Sir John and Lady Astor (who had resented her being the cause of the duel between Sir Charles and himself), been thrown unprotected on the world, and obliged from distress and necessity to accept the protection of Sir Patrick O'Neal, whom she had since left, and lived with a Mr. Devereux, who had found her out by chance, and who was thought by some people would marry her, as they had been attached to each other for several years, though, from an extraordinary train of circumstances, which she was unacquainted with, prevented from uniting their fates together;

gether; for Mrs. Helderton had traced Ermina to her lodgings, after she left the quakers, where she learnt the intimacy that subsisted between her and Devereux, and to serve her own purpose, gave it this malicious turn. She told Lord Henry, that, on being informed of the destitute situation of Miss Montrose, for whom she had conceived the warmest friendship and regard, she had endeavoured to discover what was become of her, after leaving the Affop family, that she might offer her an asylum, but her researches to her extreme mortification had been useless, till within a few weeks, when she had been informed of what had happened to her, and that she lodged with Mr. Devereux. This intelligence, she assured him, gave her the utmost pain, as she had now put it out of her power to receive her into her house, but pecuniary, and every other assistance in her power she had already offered her, and

would be always ready to bestow, though for the present it had been declined by Ermina; and, to strenthen this assertion, she shewed him a letter she pretended to have received from her, forged in imitation of her hand, in which she haughtily declined Mrs. Helderton's offers of service.

So naturally did she perform her part, that Lord Henry, who had often been told by his father, that she was exceedingly amiable, and was not apt to think ill of any one, gave easy credit to what she said, as he could not conceive what end it could answer to her to deceive him; and there certainly was more excuse for his believing her, than for Sir Charles who knew her real character. All Ermina's former asseverations of innocence he considered as the depth of art, invented by her to screen her faults, for the altered testimony of the Baron de Belmont he no longer placed any confidence in, convinced that a man who could once
tell

tell a falsehood, would not scruple on any other occasion to add more, if he found it necessary. He told Mrs. Helderton, that he would go and upbraid Ermina for her treacherous conduct towards him, but was advised by her to relinquish this idea; adding, that she was sorry to say that Ermina was of such an artful disposition, that he would again be made a dupe of her pretended virtue and goodness. With some difficulty, Lord Henry consented to follow her advice, but he watched at a lodging-house opposite to where she lived, and most unfortunately for Ermina, saw her walk out with Devereux; and again discovered them at the play, where he recognised Devereux for the same gentleman who had been so attentive to her at Ranelagh, and this confirmed him in the idea of her duplicity, and of an attachment subsisting between them, at a time when she pretended to be in love with himself.

No doubt of her guilt now remained in Lord Henry's breast, and he was overwhelmed with mortification and grief, at the depravity of the woman he still tenderly loved; and what added poignancy to his sorrows, was, her being the daughter of the brave and valuable Montrose, who would have expired with anguish, had he witnessed this deviation from virtue in his child, of whose purity of soul he had formed so high an opinion. He thought, indeed, it might be possible that distress rather than inclination had perhaps prompted her to act thus in opposition to the virtuous sentiments in which she had been educated; but whatever was the cause of her ill conduct, the effect on him was equally severe and wretched; nay, almost frantic with grief, he resolved to quit his native country, and, by flying to another climate, banish her remembrance from his bosom, which was only planted there to give him pain. He therefore exchanged his colonel's
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commission in the guards, with an officer who was going in seven or eight months to India, but wished to remain in England. His regiment was quartered at ———, and, till he received Ermina's letter, relating to Edward Roseberry, he was quite ignorant of her being in that part of the country.

His astonishment, therefore, at this remarkable circumstance was scarcely to be equalled, and the artless, pleasing, and grateful description given of her, by the old woman, made him inclined to believe her traduced, and that she was as good and innocent as Dame Primrose had described her to be ; but he checked this favourable opinion of her, recollecting Mrs. Helder-ton's warning ; and supposed that actuated by penitence and remorse, for the daughter of Montrose, he thought could not, long err, she had procured this retired situation with Mrs. St. Austin, in solitude and sorrow, to

mourn her errors, and by exercising the benevolence inherent in her nature, strive to expiate them. The hope of her return to virtue, gave him inexpressible pleasure, and he was convinced, from the old woman's unadorned narrative, that when she wrote to him in favour of Roseberry, she was ignorant whom she was addressing. From these conjectures he was almost tempted, when Dame Primrose left him, to call her back, to make more enquiries concerning her fair benefactress; but he checked this inclination, powerful as it was, for the present, notwithstanding it returned with redoubled violence; and it was this impulse of curiosity, and a wish at the same time to be a sharer in her goodness to these poor people, and to let them know to a certainty that Roseberry should be restored to them, that induced him to visit the old woman's cottage, where he so unexpectedly beheld Ermina.

He saw no signs of contrition and melancholy

choly for past errors in her countenance, though confused and agitated at the sight of him ; and he thought her more beautiful and interesting than ever, the same appearance of innocence that always charmed him still remaining. But the cautions he had received to beware of her, made him regret the prejudice he felt in her favour ; and he conducted himself in consequence of mistrusting her in the manner already related, and which he execrated himself for having done when she left him, as it had wounded her feelings, and he returned to his regiment in an agony of mind which no description can equal.

CHAPTER V.

———— Moral wisdom mildly shone
 Without the toil of art ; and virtue glow'd
 In all her smiles, without forbidding pride.

THOMSON.

SEVERAL days passed heavily away, before Ermina had resolution again to direct her steps to the glade, as her feelings, lacerated by continual sorrows, could not endure to encounter any object that revived painful recollections. Benevolence however, united with a wish for the happiness of others, was the predominant sensation of her heart ; and she blamed herself for deferring, from any selfish consideration, to know if Helen continued to amend,

amend, or if she was in want of any thing which, from her slender ability, she was able to procure her. Impressed with these ideas, she walked, as usual, alone to the habitation of Dame Primrose, whose venerable countenance brightened when she saw her, and she expressed her regret at not having seen her for so long a time, saying, she was afraid she had been ill, as she did not look so well as when she saw her before. Helen, she added, was quite out of danger, but very weak, and would be glad to see her if she would walk up stairs. Ermina followed her to her grand-daughter's chamber, whom she found seated in a chair supported by pillows, and beheld with astonishment the devastation illness had made in her form, which though always fragile, was now reduced to a shadow. She sweetly smiled at the entrance of her young and beneficent friend, attempting to rise and thank her for her goodness, which the other would not suffer, but

but sat down by her, and taking hold of her hand, congratulated her on the pleasing prospect she had before her of soon seeing her husband.

“ Ah! Heaven reward ye and the guid Laird Bochon !” said Dame Primrose, “ for ye hae-baith brought happiness upon us; and may ye, my dear yong leady, be as happily united with his lairdship, as Edward and Helen will be. You’ll pardon me, but Ise see’d in the twinkling of an eye that ye were lovyers, though ye luiked sae fearful and shy at one another; and Ise be sure niver was any gentleman more in love than he is with ye, though Ise fancy there hae bin some inimy betwixt ye, for when ye were gone, Ise saw the tears standing in my laird’s eyes, and he raved about the garden like any person beside themselves; and Ise shud a fancied the peer gentleman had lost his wits, had I not bethought me from what Ise saw, that

that it was love that made him behave so oddly. Howdomever, Ise went up to his lairdship, and, making my best curtsy, hoped he was well, and axed if he would not partake of the refreshment Ise had provided, or if I should get him any thing else. Upon this he clapped his hand to his forehead, saying, ‘ I beg your pardon, my good woman, for I fear I have alarmed you by this sudden pain in my head, which makes me hardly know what I am about.’ Ah thinks I, your lairdship mean a pain in your heart, but Ise dident say so. Weel and would you think it, he then put five guineas into my hand, and said, when yer grandson coomes home, I shall send you something more. Ise was so confounded with his guidness and generosity, that I could scarcely thank him, and when I had recovered myself he was out of sight; but wherever he goes, God will bless, I earnestly hope, his charitable and noble heart.”

Helen,

Helen, who saw how painful this discourse was to Ermina, frowned repeatedly at her grandmother, to make her desist from talking on the subject, but in vain ; as the old woman was too intent upon what she was saying to observe her ; and though this conversation gave pain to Miss Montrose, she could not be displeased with the old woman, as her loquacity proceeded from the goodness and simplicity of her heart. She desired her, however, to drop this subject, as to hear any thing more of Lord Henry was exceedingly disagreeable to her. This injunction almost brought tears into the eyes of Dame Primrose, who was grieved that any misunderstanding should exist between such a good gentleman and lady, as she hoped it was only a little love quarrel ; but now feared, from the seriousness with which Ermina spoke, that it was something of more consequence, and that she should not have the happiness of seeing her dear sweet lady married to such

such a handsome, good, and generous nobleman, as my laird the colonel.

Ermina was pleased to find Lord Henry had conducted himself with his usual liberality towards the worthy cottagers ; and sighed at the reflection, that her unfortunate destiny had doomed her to be forever separated from a disposition so similar to her own, never having yet met with any other man whose ideas were so congenial to hers in every respect, with the exception of jealousy, a fault she was very little tinctured with, rarely suspecting those she loved and esteemed. After remaining an hour with Dame Primrose and her granddaughter, she returned to the abbey, where she found Devereux making preparations for a journey to town, where his presence was requested at the marriage of a very particular friend, at which he had long promised to be present whenever it took place, and was to set off early the next morning.

morning. Sevrancey was to remain behind, as Devereux intended to return in a few weeks. Ermina lamented his departure, as he contributed, by his lively manner and diverting conversation, to banish melancholy and unpleasant retrospections from her mind, and prevented her being so much confined with Mrs. St. Austin. She wished, as he was to leave them, that Sevrancey had accompanied him, as she disliked his society, notwithstanding it was generally courted. But her opinion of him was the same as that of every other person, who was, like herself, destitute of fortune and dependent; for with the rich alone could he be a favourite, as he made it a point never to shew any attention, beyond common civility, to the former class of mankind; and, knowing Ermina to be one amongst that number, he was barely civil to her, except when in company with Devereux and his aunt, and he would then be
more

more polite, to make his court to Mrs. St. Austin, who, he easily discovered, was very fond of Ermina. The latter could not avoid sometimes laughing, when she observed, that if they were alone together for a few minutes, he was in the highest consternation, as if he feared she had some design upon his person or fortune; and always spoke in such a cold and formal manner, that she was utterly at a loss to account for such strange behaviour.

The truth was this, he was extremely vain of his own person, and always fancying every woman in love with him; he therefore had the presumption to suppose, that the sweetness of manners and pleasing attentions Ermina evinced towards him, as she did to all her friends and acquaintance, which rendered her so fascinating, was assumed solely to captivate his heart; and fearful of giving her any encouragement, he put on, when by chance he was left alone
with

with her, those constrained formal airs. Had she indeed been an angel, she would not have made any impression on his heart, as he saw charms in no one who had not the appendages of rank and a good fortune; and suspected every woman who had none, of having designs on him: and, so greedy was he of money, that he even secretly endeavoured to make Mrs. St. Austin enamoured of him; as her plentiful fortune, he thought, would be a fine addition to his own; and, as soon as Devereux had left Cumberland, he planted a whole artillery of adulation against her, and began to flatter himself he had succeeded in making an impression on her mind; mistaking the pleasure, she apparently took in the delicate flattery he administered, into approbation of himself, not reflecting (blinded by self-conceit) that the most sensible and amiable people cannot, from the frailty of human nature, avoid being pleased with an admiration of them.

themselves, when delicately expressed. He was completely deceived in imagining, that a woman of her years and excellent understanding could be prevailed upon to place herself and her fortune in the power of any man younger than herself; as she would conclude, it was interest alone that could induce any one at her time of life to make an offer of his hand: and he little imagined he was playing a game not at all likely to be advantageous to himself; but would make him, if she discovered his motives, appear quite contemptible.

Ermina was unfuspicious of the cause of his extraordinary behaviour towards her, and would have derived high amusement from it had she known it. As she was, therefore, ignorant of the real motive, she attributed his conduct to pride alone, which made him think it beneath his dignity to shew any condescension to the humble companion of Mrs. St. Austin; having observed many instances of his extreme haughtiness to her, and she
was

was often surpris'd that Devereux, the generous, affable, and undisguis'd Devereux, should like a companion so opposite to himself. But a little reflection and observation pointed out the truth, and convinced her, that whenever he chose to make himself liked and esteemed, he was sure to succeed.

Within a less period than three weeks after the last interview between Lord Henry and Ermina, Edward Roseberry was restored to his Helen, bringing with him a sum of money sufficient to enable him to stock a small farm, for which he was indebted to the bounty of his late colonel. In witnessing the felicity of this worthy pair, and their good old grandmother, she experienced so sweet a pleasure, that it soothed her sorrows; and as the greatest delight in the reflection that she was the ultimate cause of their happiness, whilst tears (yet not painful ones) would sometimes steal down her cheeks, when, in the height of
their

their gratitude, they would implore Heaven to shower down its blessings on hers and Lord Henry's head. Helen daily improved in her looks, since the source of her illness was removed, and her husband and herself presented a charming picture of conjugal happiness; while Ermina thought how much happier Squire Brandon (who she had discovered was Glencarnock's friend) would have felt, if, instead of destroying their felicity, he had endeavoured to promote it. They intended to take a farm at some distance from his estates, and were not, therefore, under any apprehension of his annoying them, as the knowledge of their misfortunes had procured them many friends; and, indeed, he seldom visited the country, since his cruel treatment of the two lovers, as it had gained him the hatred of all the lower class of people, to whom the knowledge of the story was chiefly confined. Ermina now felt comparatively happy in the content of these good people, and

the increasing kindness of Mrs. St. Austin, was very consolatory to her feelings. An additional pleasure she likewise received in a letter from sister Madelaine, from whom she had not before heard for a great length of time. She found her beloved nun sympathised in all her sorrows, wished her to return to France; and, as she had been disappointed in her fondest wishes, now advised her to retire from the world, and by taking the veil, seek within the quiet walls of St. Catherine an asylum for her woe-worn heart—advice very foreign to what she had formerly given; but she considered that, unfortunate as her young friend was, and destitute of riches, it was the happiest situation for her, as she would herself procure money sufficient to pay for Ermina's admission into the convent, as one of the sisterhood, generously offering, if she disliked what she proposed, to make her a present of the money, to dedicate to any other purpose she thought would be serviceable

able to her. This convincing proof of her unaltered friendship was soothing to our heroine's feelings ; who learnt likewise from her letter, that her silence was merely accidental, as she had not received any letters from her for a considerable time, notwithstanding she had frequently written, and had at length concluded, that Ermina's letters and hers had shared the same fate. This would have appeared unaccountable, had not they both known that letters from that distance frequently miscarried ; and Miss Montrose so very often changing her place of abode, might contribute to their not reaching her. So much was she pleased with the plan that Madelaine had proposed, that she determined, should she ever lose the protection of Mrs. St. Austin, to avail herself of it ; and writing to her to that effect, she declined accepting the money unless she took the veil ; expressing, at the same time, every thing that was grateful and affectionate for her goodness.

One day, when Ermina was reading to Mrs. St. Austin, the servant brought in some letters from the post, and, on opening one of them, she observed that lady's countenance assume an air of surprise; as she proceeded, it gradually grew more serious; and, when she had finished reading it, she sat gravely ruminating on its contents. After remaining some time silent, she suddenly turned to Ermina, and thus addressed her: "I have been considering, my dear Montrose, this letter, which nearly concerns you, and upon reflection judge it right to shew it to you. It is anonymous, and, though I seldom attend to accusations of that nature, yet these that are brought forward are so serious, that I think it absolutely necessary, for both our sakes, to acquaint you with what it contains, that you may vindicate yourself, and, perhaps, be able to trace the author of these (I am convinced) false aspersions that are thrown on your character." Having said this, she
gave

gave the letter into Ermina's hand, who, with vexation and astonishment, read a most disgraceful description of herself, in which she was represented as worthless in the extreme; that she had once been going to be married to Sir Charles Melross, who, however, though much enamoured, broke off the match on discovering that she had other attachments. This delectable epistle concluded with the writer's saying, that it was esteem for Mrs. St. Austin that had induced her to give her this intelligence; being exceedingly concerned, that a lady of her rank and valuable qualities should be the protectress of such a girl as Miss Montrose; intimating at the same time, that, if she continued to have any farther connection with her, it would be looked upon by the world as a discredit and disgrace to Mrs. St. Austin.

When Ermina had finished reading, with tears in her eyes, and all the energy of
H 3 truth

truth and innocence, she assured her valued friend how undeserving she was of this calumny, and that she could not conceive who it was, that, by blackening her reputation, constantly deprived her of those friends which the goodness of Providence raised up for her, when in the greatest distress. Mrs. St. Austin strove to console her, by saying, she felt no diminution of the regard and esteem her good conduct had inspired her with towards her, and was only grieved to find Ermina had such an inveterate enemy. While Mrs. St. Austin was speaking, the eyes of Miss Montrose glanced over the direction of the letter, and it suddenly occurred to her, that she had seen the hand-writing before; and, on a more attentive examination (for at first she had made too much observation on the contents of the epistle to heed the writing), she was certain of its being written by Mrs. Helder-ton; and the truth instantly flashed on her imagination, that she was the being
 who

who had secretly undermined her happiness. The conversation of Bridget with Fanny, in the garden at Markham-hall, recurred to her, and made her almost believe that displeasure, at the attachments of Lord Henry and Sir Charles to her, had inspired her with a hatred that provoked her thus unrelentingly to pursue her to effect her ruin. Her own unsuspecting heart had hitherto inclined her, till this conviction, to shut her eyes against suspicions of that nature, not being able to endure the idea of Mrs. Helderton's possessing a mind so depraved, as to make her injure a person who had never, in the most trifling degree, willingly offended her.

These conjectures and suspicions, that glanced in a moment across her mind, she communicated to Mrs. St. Austin, whom, though unacquainted with her story, she might easily comprehend, without relating but a small part of it, the malice of her

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whom

whom she had once styled her friend ; and the similarity of the hand-writing induced her to be of the same opinion with herself, that it could be of no other than Mrs. Helderton's composition. The post-mark was London ; and after meditating, Mrs. St. Austin said to Ermina, " I have been thinking that the best plan to pursue, will be to go instantly to town, seek out those friends with whom you say Mrs. Helderton has injured you, shew them this letter, point out the resemblance in the hand-writing, and you will then immediately convince them of your innocence. After that is accomplished, inform her either by letter or a personal application that you have discovered her baseness, which will the more confuse and surprise her, as she will be quite unprepared for it ; for your quitting me (which she no doubt will learn from some of her emissaries) she will, without doubt, suppose it to proceed from my belief of your guilt ; and to find the contrary,

trary, will overwhelm her with shame at being detected. I shall defray all the expences of your journey, and while you remain in town ; and when the affair is completed to yours and my satisfaction, you shall return to me ; nor shall I ever wish you to quit me again (unless you marry) till my death, previous to which I will amply provide for you. / Affected at goodness so unexpected, Ermina threw herself at her feet, bathing her hand, which she held out to raise her, with tears of unfeigned gratitude, whilst a smile of benevolence played on the countenance of her benefactress, at the grateful warmth she so artlessly displayed.

In the evening as she was talking to Ermina, before Sevrancey, of her intended journey, and saying she did not like the idea of her travelling alone, and wished for some person to be procured, under whose protection she could place her ; she

was agreeably surpris'd with his offering to escort Miss Montrose to the metropolis. This offer, which was only propos'd by him to make his court to Mrs. St. Austin, was joyfully accepted by her, as she did not, like Ermina, suspect his motive; the latter having seen enough of his conduct towards herself to convince her, that were it not to please Mrs. St. Austin, he would never have given himself so much trouble; but, knowing the disposition of that lady, he had taken this as the surest road to her favour, which was always by paying attention to those she loved, being generally enthusiastic in her attachments. Ermina had been so much accustomed to travel alone, and to protect herself, that she would have preferred a solitary journey to the company of a man who despis'd every person not gifted with fortune, grudging them even common politeness, except to favour some design, when he could play the hypocrite with great skill; but she dared not make any objection

tion to his accompanying her, as it was the wish of her excellent friend. The day previous to her departure, her spirits were very much depressed, by taking leave of Dame Primrose and her grand-daughter and grandson, who seemed much afflicted at her leaving the country, though she assured them it was only for a short time; and Helen and her grandmother shed tears when she left them. Several of the poor cottagers likewise of the neighbourhood crowded round her when they found she was going away, imploring Heaven's choicest blessings for her, and health and happiness, praying that nothing might happen to prevent her speedy return: for she had with fidelity and judgment distributed Mrs. St. Austin's bounty amongst them, which had never been observed before; for the persons who, till Ermina's arrival, had been the distributors of the money allowed by that lady for the relief of distressed cottagers, had embezzled the greater part of it for themselves; and

what little they bestowed, was to those who did not want it, neglecting the real objects of charity. The difference of conduct observed by Ermina, had procured the blessings of the unfortunate on her, as well as the source of her beneficence; and never had the name of St. Austin been so beloved and respected, as since Miss Montrose had resided at the abbey.

The depression of spirits which Ermina felt the preceding day, she could not shake off, and an unaccountable unwillingness to quit Mrs. St. Austin took possession of her mind, though she knew it was for a very short period; and, when the carriage came to the door, she twice returned to embrace her before she had resolution to enter it. Her venerable friend was equally unwilling to part from her, now the moment arrived, and almost repented having proposed her quitting her; but, considering again, that, as it was for her happiness, she must
not

not mind the sacrifice : for, though not the least doubting her innocence herself, she yet wished from her affection to her, that she should be restored to the good opinion of her other friends, as she could then, without a shadow of impropriety, keep her under her protection. She was more anxious on this subject, as Ermina had informed her that the scandalous aspersions of which they conjectured Mrs. Helderton to be the author, were known and believed by several people ; and her nice pride and delicate sense of honour, made her feel uncomfortable in the idea of not having these falsehoods discovered to be without foundation, as she did not like that any one who lived with her should, however false it might be, labour under such calumny, which might oblige her eventually to be separated from her, in yielding to the prejudices of the world : and she had so much regard for Ermina, that to part from her would be almost

almost more than she could endure. To have every circumstance, therefore, cleared up to her satisfaction, was absolutely necessary to spare her the pain of such a cruel event.

CHAPTER IV.

Where'er I go, I'm doom'd to trace,
 If fortune smiles, the smiling face;
 But if she frowns, I'm sure to see,
 On ev'ry face, a frown for me.

ROBINSON.

ERMINA cast a lingering look at the revered figure of her valued friend, and then again turned to gaze at her as she stood at the window, till the trees obscured her from her sight, and she could only distinguish the venerable gothic spires of the abbey, as they rose above the woods in whose umbrageous covert this antique building was inclosed. A deep sigh, arising from a cause she could scarcely define, escaped her,

her, and she remained mournfully gazing at each well-known object with sensations that could not be more painful if she knew she was never to behold them more. About a mile from the abbey, by the road-side, stood Dame Primrose and her granddaughter, who were come to take a last look of their benevolent young friend, as they had heard the carriage was to pass that way. She kissed her hand to them, whilst they respectfully saluted her, and continued standing, looking after the carriage till quite out of sight, when she could perceive them wiping the tears from their eyes. She was herself much affected at this proof of their gratitude and affection, and her own cheeks were moistened with the drops of sensibility, when she put her head again into the chaise, but she checked these effusions of a feeling heart on perceiving Sevrancey regarding her with sneering contempt, being too narrow-minded and selfish himself properly to estimate those refined sensations of
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the soul, that actuated her on these occasions. He had scarcely spoken to her from the moment they quitted Mrs. St. Austin, in whose presence he had been all attention and very talkative, and the alteration was too conspicuous to be overlooked. During the remainder of the journey he conducted himself with a reserve and hauteur, even greater than he usually observed to her when alone. He had promised Mrs. St. Austin to remain in town as long as Ermina wanted his services, which would be but a very short time, and then conduct her back to Cumberland. As soon therefore as they arrived in London, he left her at an hotel, while he went to procure her a lodging, and fixed upon a very genteel one (in obedience to the wishes of Mrs. St. Austin) in a street leading from Piccadilly, whither Ermina in the evening repaired, accompanied by Sevrancey, who, when he had seen her settled in her new habitation, made his adieu, leaving with her one of Mrs. St. Austin's

Austin's footmen who had attended them to town, on purpose to wait on her, by the orders of his mistress. Ermina was pleased with Mr. Sevrancey for procuring every thing so punctually for her accommodation, and from this consideration pardoned his haughtiness, which in fact more diverted than offended her, so empty and foolish is pride.

The following day she sent Roger to enquire if Mrs. Helderton, Lady Julia, and the Assop family, were any of them in town, who came back with the intelligence, that the first-mentioned lady was still in Portman-square, that Lady Julia had exchanged her name for that of Desmond, and had left England, and that Sir John and Lady Assop were not expected in London till the expiration of five or six weeks. The whole of this information, except the first part of it, was truly displeasing to Ermina, and she found herself much disappointed,

appointed, as she had never heard of Lady Julia's marriage, and depended on finding her in town, as she seldom left it, though far less sanguine with respect to the family in Park-lane. She judged on reflection that it would be better to remain in London till the Assops returned, but could not indulge this inclination, unless Mrs. St. Austin should have the same idea, and propose it to her. After Rogers's return, she instantly wrote her benefactress an account of every circumstance that had occurred, and then sat down to address Mrs. Helderton; for, although the injured person, she had not resolution (as she had at first intended) to call upon her, apprehensive of being treated with rudeness, as she must send up her name, without which she could not be introduced to her. Accordingly she wrote to her, in the following manner :

“ Miss

“ Miss Montrose has the honour of thanking Mrs. Helderton for the anonymous letter she was so generous as to trouble herself to write concerning her to Mrs. St. Austin, and likewise for numberless liberal observations on her character and conduct, which have, as she intended, deprived her of almost every friend. Miss Montrose feels too sensibly the respect which she owes to herself, and the consciousness of her own innocence and integrity, to condescend to desire any explanation of such uncandid and unkind treatment. She is well aware of the illiberal censures to which a female character, situated as she unfortunately has been, and at present is, is exposed, from the malignity of an ill-natured and misjudging world. But she has learned to despise (much as they have pained her) those censorious aspersions, which she feels conscious she has never deserved. She cannot help thinking, however, that those who, like Mrs. Helderton,
are

are prompt to believe and invent scandalous reports to her disadvantage, which are wafted abroad by the envenomed breath of calumny or envy, must have their private reasons for wishing true these cruel insinuations, which their conscience and cooler reflections cannot but tell them are false. Miss Montrose would thank Mrs. Helderton for her past attentions, did the mode of closing their acquaintance admit of such acknowledgment. She hopes, however, that Mrs. Helderton's future friendships may be more sincere on her own part, and more honourable on the part of those who are admitted to so precarious and short-lived a distinction."

Clarges-street, Wednesday.

When she had concluded this note, which was as severe as her gentle nature would allow her to dictate, but not sufficiently poignant for the deep injuries she had done Ermina (the full extent of which the latter

latter being yet in ignorance of), she immediately dispatched Roger with it to Portman-square, desiring him not to wait for an answer.

Mrs. Helderton was at home when the note from Ermina was delivered, and it is impossible to do justice to her rage and astonishment, at being discovered to be the author of the anonymous letter to Mrs. St. Austin; for, not imagining that Ermina would see it, but be instantly discharged from her situation, as she had heard her benefactress was a very scrupulous, proud woman, she had neglected to disguise her hand sufficiently, and had written it in great haste. She was likewise alarmed at the hints given by Ermina of being acquainted with the other injuries she had done her, and terror for the first time shook her guilty soul with the fear, that all her diabolical plans that had destroyed Ermina's happiness would be brought to light. She raved, stormed,

stormed, and shed tears of passion, till she threw herself into strong hysterics, which alarmed all her attendants, on whom she vented her rage when she recovered, as she could not revenge herself on Miss Montrose. Bridget, from being more about her person, received the full torrent of her ill humour, and was accused by her of having by her foolish tattle caused the injuries she had done Ermina to be circulated till they reached her ears. Not accustomed to such treatment, as Mrs. Helderton had hitherto been afraid even to contradict her for fear of being betrayed, as she had been her confidant in all her wicked schemes, the waiting-maid could not endure to be reproached for what she did not deserve; for however guilty she was in respect to other people, she had always confined her mistress's secrets to her own bosom, and therefore retorted very impudently again. The enraged widow immediately ordered her to quit her service for this behaviour,

for

for conscious guilt having made her a coward, she supposed every thing discovered, and that the secrecy of Bridget was of little consequence now, becoming as furious against her as she had been against Miss Montrose. Besides, as she was very parsimonious, and her abigail of no farther service to her, she was glad to get rid of her, as the latter under various pretences was continually extorting money, which, knowing herself to be so much in her power, she had not dared to refuse. She now, therefore, gladly dismissed Bridget, only paying her wages, without any other gratuity; and, overwhelmed with chagrin and mortification more bitter than ever she had made Ermina experience, whose sorrows were unmixed with guilt, left town in a few days for Bath, without taking any notice of the note Miss Montrose had written to her, which convinced her more than ever of her being the enemy she had suspected.

In answer to Ermina's letter, Mrs. St. Austin wrote to desire she would remain in town (as she had secretly wished) till the arrival of Sir John and Lady Assop, that she might see them herself, and explain her innocence, and informing her that she intended to write to her ladyship, to request she would hear what Miss Montrose had to say in her own defence, that she might not risque being refused to be heard, for the respectable name of St. Austin she knew would have an influence, whilst that of the more unfortunate Montrose might be disregarded. Mrs. St. Austin at the same time sent her a country bill for fifty pounds, telling her to get it discounted at her banker's, and to speak to him likewise about some money which she wished to place very shortly in his hands. As Ermina was in immediate want of the money, though overcome with fatigue, from having taken a long walk into the city and back again, she would not attend to it, and instantly set

out alone to Mr. Addersley's the banker, who fortunately lived at the west end of the town.

This gentleman had been very well known to her father, and, having had occasion to go twice there on business since the loss of her little fortune, had always been received by him with great politeness. Feeling a dislike to entering the public office as she was alone, she knocked at the private door as she had done once before, and been admitted to Mr. Addersley. On the door being opened by a footman, Ermina asked if his master was at home. The man said he did not know, but would go and see, and left her standing in a handsome hall. Here she remained a quarter of an hour, during which interval she observed the servant running up and down stairs with a face of anxiety, whilst, tired of waiting, she had seated herself in one of the hall chairs, not much pleased with her situation,

situation, which was rather degrading, as she was placed on an equality with footmen and other low people who come to the house with messages, &c. As she sat ruminating on this rude treatment, and thinking of going away without finishing her business, she suddenly heard a loud shrill voice, bawl, or rather shriek out, "Miss Montrose, Miss Montrose." This ill-bred summons she did not attend to, at first supposing it must be some other female of the same name, that was thus vulgarly addressed by the housemaid or scullion, till the harmonious voice again repeated, "Miss Montrose, I say, Miss Montrose:" then, in a gruffer tone, "Why? is not Miss Montrose there?" This repetition of the sound startled Ermina, and concluding it must be herself that was thus loudly called on, she arose and advanced to the foot of the staircase (as the voice appeared to proceed from that way), and beheld at the top of it (being exceedingly high and elegant)

the figure of an elderly lady, whose countenance she could not clearly distinguish from the great height between them, though she plainly perceived her stare at her for ten minutes with a haughty supercilious air. Ermina in this time was hesitating whether to ascend the staircase or not, and had actually placed her foot on the first stair with an intention, though uninvited, to walk up, supposing the lady (however ungenteel her manner) could be no other than Mrs. Addersley, who had something to say by summoning her with so much freedom, and that she had, probably from forgetfulness, rather than want of politeness, neglected asking her to come up stairs. But she was delighted at having checked the impulse she felt to approach her nearer, on hearing the lady drawl out, after having gratified her curiosity by staring sufficiently at her, "We---el, Mi---ss Mont---rose," as much as to say, What's your business here, young woman?

woman? Astonished at such insolent and rude treatment, which exceeded every thing she had ever yet encountered, and which she would have disdained to practise (however elevated her situation) to the most abject person in the world, she replied, "I wish, madam, to speak to Mr. Addersley." No answer was returned to this; but another insolent stupid stare, and the footman at that moment again making his appearance, Mrs. Addersley once more screamed out, in her screech-owl voice, "Tell your master I'm not at home to any of his company." Petrified at this increasing impertinence, Ermina retreated from the foot of the staircase, and addressing the servant, said, "Mr. Addersley is, I imagine, engaged?" The man answered very respectfully that he was. "It is of no consequence, then," replied Ermina, "I will call another time," and immediately left the house, determined, however, never to enter it again.

The want of politeness (to give it no harsher term) she had met with had mortified and astonished her not a little; but on reflection she could not help heartily laughing at the ignorance and mean pride of poor Mrs. Addersley, who had thought proper, from having perhaps heard from her husband of her misfortunes, to treat her with such excessive rudeness. By this conduct she had forfeited all claim to the character of a gentlewoman; for any female who could treat with contempt and haughtiness a lady, whose only fault was the being deprived of the gifts of fortune to which she was born, must lose all pretensions to that character herself, and make the insulted person, even if she were not so before, infinitely her superior. To have been commonly civil would not have cost Mrs. Addersley any thing, and been advantageous to her husband; as Mrs. St. Austin, on Ermina's giving her a description (merely to divert her) of the scene that

had

had passed at the banker's, was so disgusted with the rudeness she had received, that she ordered the money she had intended to have placed with Mr. Addersley, to be put in the hands of another person.

Ermina had been nearly a fortnight in town, during which period she had lived in the greatest retirement, having rarely walked out but for health or on business, and seen Devereux and Sevrancey not more than five or six times. They were now both returned to Cumberland, as her making a stay in London so much longer than had been at first intended, had induced Sevrancey, at the request of Mrs. St. Austin, to relinquish his intention of remaining in town to conduct Miss Montrose back again to the abbey, as she could not endure to trespass any farther on his inclination to oblige her, and begged he would return with her nephew. This proposal he was far from wishing to decline, being

anxious to have frequent opportunities of personally paying her attention, and accordingly accompanied Devereux into Cumberland.

CHAPTER V.

Hope is a transient summer dream,
 Where visions gay and flattering seem:
 But truth and reason wake to see
 Them waste away, and fade, like me.

ROBINSON.

ERMINA, rather uneasy at not having received any reply to a letter she had written to Mrs. St. Austin about nine or ten days before, nor to several others she had written since, was seated at her drawing-room window, endeavouring to divert her thoughts, which were very melancholy, by the passing objects. As she was, however, indulging a train of gloomy ideas that in
 15 spite

spite of all her efforts presented themselves, she observed a gentleman on the other side of the way whose figure had a strong resemblance to Sevrancey; but thinking it impossible for it to be him, whom she supposed in Cumberland, how great was her astonishment at seeing him cross directly opposite the house, which giving her a nearer view she was convinced it must be himself, and his knocking directly at the door made it beyond all doubt.

The grave solemnity of his air, when he entered, made her almost start with surprise, but taking little notice of it she eagerly enquired with an unaccountable palpitation of heart how Mrs. St. Austin did. At this question, he hesitated, looked concerned, and at length said she was very ill. "Oh heavens! how you alarm me!" Ermina replied, struck with a dreadful presentiment of some calamity. "I will go instantly to her, perhaps she has sent you
for

for me." "Compose yourself, Miss Montrose," said Sevrancey, "your cares for her will now be of little avail, she is beyond the reach of them." "Does she no longer exist then?" asked the trembling Ermina; "my foreboding heart tells me it is so." Sevrancey remained silent, which too plainly told the fatal truth, and threw her into an agony of extreme grief; she clasped her hands, and bursting into tears raised her suffused eyes to heaven, exclaiming, "Now I am indeed friendless; Oh my friend, my benefactress, would I were laid with you in the grave! wretched and forlorn, who will now protect me since you are gone?" Overcome with increasing emotion, she would have sunk on the floor, had not Sevrancey supported her to a chair. When she was in some degree recovered, and had relieved her heart by plentifully weeping, she summoned resolution to enquire, when the mournful event took place (which had shocked her the more from its being so sudden),

den), and learnt, that it was a few days after the first letter she had written to her, which was unanswered, that Mrs. St. Austin was seized with a slight convulsive fit, and expired with almost as much ease as if going to sleep, and that, not a quarter of an hour before this attack, she was apparently in perfect health. Ermina was surprised and hurt, that neither Devereux or Sevrancey had written to prepare her for this event, and which would have been less shocking to her than receiving this heart-rending intelligence at a moment so unexpected.

The fact, however, was this, though Sevrancey did not choose for his own sake to confess it, that Devereux was confined to his bed with a dangerous illness, occasioned by his aunt's unexpected death, which had violently affected him, as he tenderly loved her; nor could the acquisition of her large fortune recompense him at that time for the
 loss

loss of such an affectionate and worthy relative. But ill as he was, he had notwithstanding thought of poor Ermina, requesting his friend to prepare her for their mutual misfortune, and assure her in his name that he would be the friend she had lost, and fulfil those liberal intentions of his aunt towards her, which her so suddenly quitting this life had prevented her from putting in execution, and intreated, in the mean while, that when she wanted money she would draw upon him. But Sevrancey would not give himself the trouble to comply with his friend's request, and as he was going to town, thought to call upon her was quite sufficient, just to inform her of the event: for Devereux had suggested to him, that it would be humane and considerate in him so to do, and he could not possibly therefore avoid it. He was quite out of humour at being disappointed in his designs on Mrs. St. Austin's fortune, having expected, at least, if he did not succeed

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in making her in love with him, that he should receive a very considerable legacy, and his disappointment was the more bitter, from his expectations being raised so high, and then totally defeated by this sudden and unforeseen catastrophe. Ermina grew more and more disgusted with him, for though he now and then called on her for a few minutes, he paid her less attention than he had ever done, and that in truth had always been very trifling, and merely as has been before observed, to please Mrs. St. Austin, which being no longer necessary he had nearly thrown aside. High rank and riches alone claimed his deference and assiduous respect: it is true indeed he was generally polite, but it was a cold politeness, and evinced that he could not feel the smallest predilection for any being, that was poor, though he would sometimes endeavour to serve them, that it might be blazoned in the world, strengthen the good opinion it already had of him, and gain him
him

him the reputation of extensive benevolence. There was an increasing grave-formality and sternness in his manner, that made Ermina more uncomfortable and confused than ever in his presence, and he often repeated to her, that he thought the unfortunate should never enjoy any of the amusements of life, or suffer a smile to dimple their cheeks.

These reiterated misfortunes that happened to Ermina made her spirits, though naturally good, sink entirely into despondence. She found the world, with a few exceptions, completely guided by self-interest or vanity, and that merit and suffering virtue were wholly disregarded, when placed by the side of luxurious affluence, and those who made a brilliant appearance in life. She often wept and sighed for the loss of her revered benefactress, whose memory she cherished with gratitude and affection, whilst she likewise mourned again her hapless destiny, which would oblige
her

her once more to encounter new characters, and perhaps plunge her (if it were possible) into situations still more distressing than she had yet experienced; the despairing tenor of her mind, enervated by repeated sorrows, having made her view every thing in the most gloomy light. At all events, she must use every exertion to procure some employment for herself, before the expiration of another fortnight, which would terminate the six weeks she was to have remained in London, waiting the arrival of the Assops, a month of it being already elapsed; but she no longer thought of justifying herself to them, as she had no one now to assist her in defending herself. Her mind, replete with melancholy images and painful recollections, often had recourse to writing to dispel its sadness, and, in a moment of acute sorrow, to divert her mental anguish, she wrote the subsequent gloomy lines :

Time

Time was I lightly tript it o'er the dew,
 And gaily danc'd beneath the moon's soft beam !
 Now Cynthia's silv'ry orb I mournful view,
 With tearful eyes from whence my sorrows stream.

In peace and happy ignorance I breath'd,
 Careless as lambs that frolick o'er the green ;
 Ofttimes, I rosebuds, with the thorn enwreath'd—
 Too true an emblem of my fate I ween !

When Sol's bright cheering rays no more are seen,
 And nature's gloomy, as my wretched mind ;
 Joys, that are past, fade swift as airy dreams,
 More fleet than shadows, or the wint'ry wind.

Like to the ruins of yon aged pile
 Is my sad fortune, mourn'd, alas ! in vain ;
 That face, which once would on me sweetly smile,
 Now, coldly glancing, eyes me with disdain.

As the torpedo's touch misfortunes fled,
 For fear its influence should fatal be ;
 But to our God can mis'ry raise its head,
 And hope for blessings, while we bend the knee !

Had Sevrancey good naturedly, and as
 in honour he ought to have done, informed
 her

her of the just and generous intentions of Devereux towards her, a weight of care would have been removed from her mind, and she would have viewed the future with some degree of hope; but being kept in ignorance of what would have afforded her so much consolation, she looked forward to certain misery. To oblige her landlady, she had paid the rent in advance, and having purchased a variety of articles for Mrs. St. Austin which she had sent down to her, she had only a few guineas remaining at the very time she received the news of her friend's death. It was therefore absolutely necessary that she should determine speedily on some eligible plan to support herself, as she was unacquainted with Devereux's liberal intentions towards her; Sevrancey continuing not sufficiently interested about her to think of the pleasure and ease it would give her mind, to know she would be secured from poverty and dependence, as the noble-hearted Devereux wished him
to

to assure her, that she should be placed (as was his aunt's intention, which he held sacred) beyond the reach of distress, and have every comfort in her power. Once when Sevrancey called, Ermina had it in idea to request him to recommend her as a companion to some lady, which his numerous connexions would have made no difficult task; but his forbidding aspect deprived her of utterance, when she attempted to speak on the subject; and, finding she could not have courage to succeed, she resolved no longer to hesitate about inserting an advertisement for herself in the newspaper for a situation as governess to two young ladies. This she did several times without the desired success, as all those ladies who answered her advertisement, found something or other in her to object to; as, that she was too handsome and elegant to be fortunate, unless recommended in this undertaking: indeed it was rather a nursery-maid than a governess that
 most

most of them wanted. To be by birth and education a gentlewoman is certainly the greatest disadvantage that can happen to any young female, that wants a situation of this kind, or any employment, by which she is to gain an honourable subsistence; for it is a melancholy truth to acknowledge, that the generality of the fair sex cannot endure to encourage the industry of those as well born and educated as themselves (however diligent, humble, and industrious they may be), from the idea that they cannot insult them with that impunity, nor take such liberties with them as with inferior persons, whose mean minds do not feel so acutely the arrogance and insolence with which they are treated, and will even frequently stoop to flatter those who revile and despise them. There is in fact no object in existence so pitiable, as a lovely young woman of education and family in distress; for their own sex are usually envious, ill-natured, and unfriendly to them,
nor

nor is the other much better disposed in their favour, as they will use every art to seduce them, thinking them (which is, alas ! too often the case from their being exhausted by repeated misfortunes) an easy prey. Then, afterwards abandoned by their seducers, unpitied and unrelentingly condemned by the other more fortunate females—who, living in every luxury, have no temptations to induce them to quit the paths of rectitude—they rush by different gradations from one degree of vice to another, and at length die, wretched, unlamented, and unknown. Oh did ye, ye females, but reflect how much heavenly compassion adorns the heart, how much the tears of pity, trembling in the eye for a frail and erring sister, adds a charm to beauty, you would no longer view with scorn and pride an unfortunate woman, who has been driven by sorrow, art, and neglect, to lose sight of that virtue she once loved.

Thus

Thus feeling and compassionate for the errors of others, as every excellent woman should be, was Ermina. Never did she deform her face as so many ladies do, by a contemptuous sneer, or haughty pout of the lip, at the sight of any of those unhappy women, who, though they have lost one virtue, may yet have many others remaining to make them more estimable, than those who haughtily deride them. Our heroine's feelings and generosity often indeed carried her beyond the bounds of prudence, and frequently brought her into distress by it. A few days before the expiration of the fortnight she was to remain in Clarges-street, when her little stock of money was expended, except half-a-guinea and a few shillings, in paying for her advertisements, which though they had not been productive of any benefit, cost nearly a guinea, and in discharging a bill for washing, her board, &c. &c. she went out to take a short walk in the streets, the wretchedness

edness of her mind exceeding all description, and every thing she had yet experienced.

As she walked pensively along, scarcely regarding the passing objects, and solitary though in the midst of a crowd, a plaintive voice imploring charity drew her attention, and she looked at the person who addressed her with commiseration; for, although disfigured with rags, want, and misery, there was something very interesting in the countenance of the poor petitioner, a girl apparently not more than seventeen. She was wan, emaciated, her cheeks hollow, and her eyes sunk in her head, but the traces of beauty were evident, though corroding care, poverty, and disease, had effaced its first lustre. Ermina gently asked what could have reduced her to such an abject state, for her manner and expressions were genteel. A faint blush tinged her faded cheek at this question, and casting down her eyes, she mildly and falteringly articulated,

culated, that she was an unhappy orphan, well brought up, who had been seduced, and then abandoned by the man she loved, and for whom she had risked every thing to the extreme of guilt and wretchedness, which distress and want of friends had unwillingly plunged her into. A tear of sensibility for her sorrows Ermina involuntarily let fall, as she drew from her pocket her last half-guinea, and slipped it into the delicate white hand of the poor girl, which she held from beneath her tattered cloak. A fervent "God bless you!" reached her ear, as Miss Montrose, who sighed that it was not in her power to do more to relieve her, turned hastily away. She felt, however, her spirits renovated with the pleasing reflection that it would be of some little comfort to her, nor did she recollect till she got home, that worldly motives ought to have forbidden her to give so much, as she would probably soon be reduced to as indigent a state herself, having but a few shillings left for

for her own use. These thoughts, though they made her uneasy, did not incline her to repent the good action she had done, and she would have been more miserable not to have relieved the unfortunate girl. She, therefore, sat down very contentedly to dine on some dry bread and a glass of water, which was sweetened by the reflection for whom she had made the sacrifice of her dinner.

But with all her philosophy and philanthropy, she could not avoid being exceedingly uneasy at her destitute situation, which, added to the extreme frugality with which she had lived for some days past, and having no one to whom she could confide her distress, reduced her to a very weak and low state; and, towards evening, she felt so much exhausted with her sufferings, that she threw herself on the sofa, to try if she could forget her cares in a few hours' sleep. The wished-for relief was not denied her,

and she sunk into a sweet slumber ; for, though oppressed with poverty and affliction, no guilty recollections prevented her tasting repose, her thoughts, words, and actions, being as pure as virtue, benevolence, and innocence could render them.

She had slept nearly two hours, when she was awoke by a loud knocking at the door, but, not imagining it was any visitor to her, she continued pensively reclining in the same posture on the sofa, though she no longer felt any inclination to sleep. Presently after she heard footsteps ascending the stairs, and then a gentle rap at the door of her apartment. Hardly sensible of what she did, from being scarcely recovered from sleep, she hastily started up, and had just pronounced, " Come in," when the venerable, and almost forgotten and revered, form of Lord Valancey presented itself before her, bowing respectfully as he entered. Surprise and shame (as she concluded

cluded he had heard every ill report of her from Mrs. Ballendan, and knew not to what cause to attribute this visit) deprived her of her usual ease and elegance of manners, and gave her a confused and awkward air, whilst she found the power of utterance denied her. No less agitated than herself, which her own confusion prevented her immediately observing, he advanced towards her and exclaimed, with an emotion that increased her astonishment, "Oh thou, beloved and sole relic of the house of Belvidere, all that remains to me of my unfortunate daughter, poor, persecuted child of hapless parents, say thou canst forgive me, and then come to the arms of thy repentant grandfather, who will protect and shelter thee in future from those blasts of adversity that have too long oppressed thy meek, thy virtuous heart!" Struck with these remarkable words, as with a flash of lightning, Ermina sunk at his feet, overcome with a variety of sensations, imploring him

in a faint voice to bless her. Tears of mingled joy and sorrow suffused his eyes, and fell fast on his aged countenance, as he raised her from her humble posture, which he said would rather become him than herself, as he could never sufficiently atone for having by his neglect and cruelty to her father and mother caused her to be exposed to the world, unprotected and poor, by which she had encountered so much sorrow and insult ; and that had she been guilty of the greatest errors, instead of conducting herself with honour and integrity and withstanding all temptations, he should have considered himself as answerable to God for her faults, “ as pride, vanity and ambition,” he continued, “ have been erased from this erring breast ever since the moment that the last of my offspring reposed in the silent grave.” “ Do not, I intreat you, my beloved and respected grandfather,” replied Ermina, almost subdued with contending emotions, “ do not, I beseech you,
 recal

recal unpleasant retrospections. Your present goodness compensates for every thing that is past ; and desolate as I was before this joyful moment, I am now happy beyond expression in having found another parent." Soothed by her affectionate behaviour, and by the many additional gentle and tender arguments she offered for his consolation, Lord Valancey grew calmer, and recovered from the agitation which had made him pay little attention to any thing but introducing himself to his grand-daughter, whose reception of him he feared, from her knowledge of his unkindness to her mother, might not be flattering to his feelings. He now therefore was collected enough to view, with surprise nearly bordering on horror, the emaciated face, hollow eyes, and pallid cheeks, of the blooming Ermina he had formerly known ; and when he learnt from her, as she related the principal parts of her story to him, that want had chiefly contributed to reduce her

to this pitiable state, he cast his eyes filled with tears on her fragile form, then raising them to heaven, said in a mournful voice, "Oh my God, manifold is thy mercy, for do not I deserve the severest calamities to befall me, revelling in every luxury, whilst my amiable grandchild wanted even the necessaries of life?" Ermina, pained to the soul to see him still continue thus bitterly to reproach himself, affectionately embraced him, assuring him that the happiness she now enjoyed, would amply recompense her, even were her sufferings more severe than she had experienced. When they were both recovered from their agitation, and sufficiently composed to converse on less interesting subjects, Lord Valancey desired she would prepare to go to Grosvenor-square the next morning, to take up her residence at his house, as he himself would fetch her in his carriage. He remained with her till ten o'clock, and having seen her take some wine and
jelly,

jelly, which revived her extremely, as she was quite faint for want of nourishment, and from the surprise she had undergone, and giving her some money to discharge her lodging, after affectionately embracing and blessing her, he bid her adieu, desiring she would go instantly to bed, and get quite well against he called the next morning.

CHAPTER VI.

“ O Henry ! when thou deign’st to sue,
 Can I thy suit withstand ?
 When thou, dear youth, hast won my heart,
 Can I refuse my hand ?

PERCY,

THE sweet reflection that she was restored to affluence and reputation, by being under a protection so honourable as her grandfather’s, prevented Ermina’s taking much repose ; but, though too happy to sleep, the exquisite consolation diffused into her mind gave an animated lustre to her eyes, and threw that natural vivacity into her countenance, which was such an addition to its beauty, and which had, for a long interval, been banished from it. Lord Valancey

lancey had, therefore, when he came, the extreme satisfaction of seeing her look considerably better, and was cheered with the hope that in a few weeks, as her mind was at ease, she would no longer be so thin and pale as he had at present the sorrow of beholding her. Belvidere-house, of which she was now the mistress, had been purchased by her great-grandfather, and thus named by him. It was a most elegant, grand, and extensive mansion, and she almost fancied herself a little queen; so great did the contrast appear between her late situation, and the one she at this moment enjoyed. Soon after she had fixed her abode in Grosvenor-square, Lord Valancey related to her in what manner he had discovered she was his grand-daughter, and which she was much interested to learn.

From the first instant, he said, that he had seen her at Mrs. Ballendan's, he had been prejudiced in her favour from the likeness she had to the daughter he had so

cruelly treated, and which he had lamented ever since death had deprived him of his other children, which he began to consider as a just punishment for his pride and unfeeling conduct; having likewise heard that his daughter and her husband were no more, and had left an orphan child, whom he never sought after, but abandoned as if no relation of his. Since restored to a recollection in what manner he ought to act, he had inquired but could gain no intelligence of her fate; and it was not till that night at the opera, when the sight of the picture flushed conviction on his mind, that he had the least idea of her being the hapless descendant of Ermina Belvidere and Augustus Montrose. At this discovery, he was overwhelmed with a variety of sensations that oppressed and distracted him; and, whilst delighted at discovering his grand-daughter possessed beauty, accomplishments, and elegance, that would do honour to the noble family from which she

was

was descended, he yet felt overwhelmed with affliction, as the consciousness of the wrongs he had done her parents, suggested the idea that she had, perhaps, been educated by them to think of him with horror and abhorrence; and, though his present title, to which he had lately succeeded, would prevent her knowing he was her grandfather, should she by any accident be acquainted with his being the *ci-devant* Lord Belvidere, she might probably regard him with a detestation, that would overcome him with grief. Again he would reflect, that amiable and gentle as she apparently was, in disposition as well as person so nearly resembling her mother, she had been, perhaps, taught by her and nature, not to cherish sentiments of hatred; and would, most likely, view with joy and sensibility his contrition for past severity to her parents. This conflict in his mind brought on a nervous fever, and, not having resolution to view his injured grand-daughter, he retired

to one of his country seats, resolving to recruit his health, and argue himself into sufficient strength of mind to disclose his near relationship to her. After remaining a few months in the country he returned to town, finally determined to unbosom himself to Ermina, and introduce her to the world as his grand-daughter ; but how great was his disappointment and sorrow, when he had formed this resolution, to learn from Mrs. Ballendan a most disgraceful account of her conduct ! Unwilling, however, to give credit to it, he inquired the name and residence of the good quakers, under whose protection she had been ; and, hastening into Hertfordshire, was informed by the worthy Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield, whom he acquainted with his affinity to her, of every circumstance they knew relative to her history, and their stedfast belief in her innocence. Uniting their lamentations with his for her luckless destiny, they again joined their exertions with those

those he once more made to discover her retreat; but their present researches continued equally fruitless with the former; and it was solely to chance, when he had resigned all hope of recovering her, that Lord Valancey was indebted for having his regretted grand-daughter restored to him. Passing down Clarges-street, two days before he introduced himself to Ermina, he saw her enter the house in which she resided; and, having inquired (from the fear of perhaps mistaking her for some lady who might strongly resemble her) if a young lady named Montrose lodged there, and being answered in the affirmative, he flew to atone for past wrongs, by restoring the friendless, unfortunate, offspring of neglected parents, to that affluence and rank her birth and merit gave her a right to enjoy; and which adversity, by purifying and correcting her mind, better calculated her to sustain with dignity, benevolence, and
humility;

humility; for, to use the words of an admired poet*, she was

———— form'd with every grace complete,
Yet these neglecting, above beauty wise,
And far transcending such a vulgar praise.

Lord Valancey evinced the most unabated tenderness towards her, profusely supplying her with money, which he knew gave her the highest gratification, as it placed it so largely in her power to indulge her natural beneficence; the most exquisite pleasure she could participate in, being to relieve the indigent and afflicted, whose sorrows she knew too well from experience not to sympathise in them, and inwardly vowed never to forget how much she had suffered from poverty, ill treatment, and grief. She had written Mrs. Heywood a narrative of her misfortunes, and unexpected restoration to fortune and honour; requesting at the same time, that she would

* Thomson,

impart

impart her prosperity to Terefe, and, if she was still in Westmoreland, send her up immediately to her by the stage. In answer to this letter, she had the sweet satisfaction of learning, that the knowledge of her happiness imparted a portion of it, in the breasts of the amiable Mrs. Heywood her worthy husband, and their dear Merelina; though they had never doubted her being unjustly traduced, whilst the faithful Terefe, who had continued in Westmoreland, was almost frantic with joy, and danced, sung, and chattered away in broken English so unintelligibly, that she was more difficult than ever to be understood from the excess of her rapture. The good rector had let the cottage, and retained her with them at the parsonage, perceiving that she was so much dejected at being separated from her beloved lady, and so prepossessed with the idea that she should live with her again, that they found her quite incapable of undertaking another place; and, fortunately, her forebodings

bodings were verified. Ermina likewise heard, that in consequence of receiving intelligence from her, as Mr. Heywood was coming to town on business, he intended bringing his family with him, purposely to have the satisfaction of seeing and embracing her ; and that, in the beginning of the following week, they would set off for London, bringing Terefe in their suite, who was so impatient to see her dear mistress, that they could with difficulty persuade her to wait this arrangement, which was so much for her advantage ; as her imperfect knowledge of the English language would, probably, bring her into some unpleasant adventures, as she had never travelled alone in England.

This information gave Ermina the purest delight ; and when these valuable friends, accompanied by Terefe, visited Grosvenor-square, her pleasure was unspeakable. They all wept with joy at a meeting so long desired,

fired, and the affectionate Frenchwoman overwhelmed her mistress with caresses, the spontaneous effusions of a faithful heart; but when somewhat recovered from her transport, she drew a sigh from her lady's bosom, by shaking her head and saying in a mournful voice as she looked at her, " Ah pauvre mi Lor Henri." The Earl insisted on the Heywoods becoming inmates of his house; and the affability and kindness he evinced towards them, was a convincing proof that he had learnt to know himself, and see the vanity of all human pride. His grand-daughter had now the satisfaction of being accompanied by Merelina, whom she loved for her goodness, gentleness, and vivacity, when she made her visits, received company, and went to public places, which she frequently did in compliance with Lord Valancey's wishes. Blest with the society of her friends who loved her tenderly, with riches that enabled her to follow the dictates of her liberal mind; the idol of her
repentant

repentant grand-father, whose affection for her daily increased; happiness now seemed completely within her grasp, and with a disposition so sweet as she possessed, she would certainly have attained it, had not the destroyer of her peace, the sad remembrance of Lord Henry, in defiance of her efforts to banish this idea, obtruded even in her gayest moment and poisoned her felicity. As she, however, never willingly thought of him, she hoped in time to forget he had ever been dear to her heart; and the lively scenes in which she mingled with the thoughtless part of mankind, like them to dissipate painful recollections, promised soon to obliterate all traces of an affection that had been, except at its commencement, a source of continual misery to her. Allured by her fortune, her rank and personal charms, the earl received several advantageous proposals of marriage for her; but suffering her to be quite a free agent in these affairs, they were all rejected, as not
one

one of the gentlemen could create an interest in her bosom ; and she was too happy in her present situation to wish to change it for any other. Mr. and Mrs. Heywood, after remaining a month at Belvidere-house, repaired into Shropshire, to take possession of a very valuable living in the earl's gift, which he had presented to Mr. Heywood, as the income was greatly superior to that he enjoyed in Westmoreland. They indulged Ermina, with permitting Merelina to remain with her five or six months longer ; thus making her a compensation for the loss of their society, which she sincerely regretted, though they were to meet again in the summer, Lord Valancey having an estate that lay contiguous to Mr. Heywood's living, which he intended to visit.

Hitherto Miss Montrose had not been recognised by any of her former intimate friends, notwithstanding her frequent appearance in public, till one evening, at a splendid

splendid rout, given by a celebrated fashionable character, her eye accidentally glanced as she walked up the room, on the well-known form of Lady Assop, who appeared to have likewise distinguished her at the same instant. Not having resolution to first address her, from the uncertainty of what reception she should receive, she was very agreeably surprised at seeing her ladyship, whose eyes were directed towards her, arise, after a few minutes, and approaching to the place where she was seated, began speaking to her in the most cordial and affectionate terms; saying, after the first compliments were over, that it was owing to Bridget's resentment against her mistress for having offended her, that the injuries the latter, in concert with her, had done Ermina were developed; and proceeded to relate, having heard it from the waiting woman, a long detail of the various arts and plans practised by Mrs. Helderton to effect the ruin of her reputation; for Bridget had immediately,

diately, on being dismissed by her mistress, hastened to Lady Assop, and unfolded the whole scene of wickedness. Ermina was almost petrified on hearing such unexampled and unprovoked treachery ; and inwardly returned thanks for escaping from these machinations, which might have totally ruined her peace of mind ; and which as it was, had inflicted so deep a wound by her slanderous aspersions in her gentle breast, that a length of time must elapse before it could be perfectly healed. She then imparted in her turn to Lady Assop, her present good fortune in being under the protection of her grandfather, to which she was before entirely a stranger, and which she expressed unfeigned satisfaction in hearing. They passed the greater part of the evening in interesting conversation, nor did they separate, till her ladyship had made Miss Montrose promise to call on her the next morning.

Ermina

Ermina informed Lord Valancey of her unexpected rencontre with Lady Affop, and its consequences. He was equally pleased with herself at her being restored to the good opinion of her former friend, perfectly approving of her making her a visit. The day was exceedingly fine, and Merelina having likewise a morning visit to make in Warwick-street, Ermina resolved to walk through St. James's-park to Sir John's, and order the carriage, when it had taken up Miss Heywood, to call for her in Park-lane. She had not advanced far up the Mall, when she perceived coming towards her two officers of the guards, with another in different regimentals, whose air and figure reminded her, though at some distance, of Lord Henry. This resemblance revived his almost banished image, and, filled with melancholy recollections, she was so much absorbed in them, that the officers had passed her some minutes without her observing it; when, accidentally looking
back

back at a beautiful child that a nurse had in her arms, she perceived the officer, whose likeness to Lord Henry had struck her so forcibly, looking after her; and the plain view she now had of his face convinced her, that it could be no other than Lord Henry himself. He no sooner however saw that that she discovered he was regarding her, than he eagerly turned on his heel and averted his head as if touched with a stroke of electricity, whilst Ermina followed his example, her whole form suffering the most painful agitation. The colour fled her cheek, and gave way to an ashy paleness; and had he been near, which he fortunately was not, the emotion she betrayed would have been visible to him, her countenance being ever an index of her mind, as she could not disguise her feeling. "O Henry!" she mentally exclaimed, while tears of sorrow swelled into her eyes, and were hastily dashed away, "I imagined, vainly imagined, I could despise thee for thy contempt and
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ill treatment, because you beheld how dear you was to my heart ; but, alas ! I fear my affection for thee will never be effaced, since only the accidental sight of you, when the disdain you evince towards me proves that I must be the object of your hatred and dislike, can raise such torturing emotion in my bosom." Fortunately there were few people in the park, or her agitation must have been observed ; and, as she walked very fast, scarcely knowing what she did, she had hardly recovered herself, when she reached Sir John's. Lady Astor, surprised at the different appearance she made, from the last evening, kindly inquired if she was indisposed. To this question, which covered her with confusion, she replied in the affirmative, complaining of an head-ache which had attacked her since she walked out, and which she hoped would soon be removed. This was believed by her ladyship ; and, after passing an agreeable hour with her, and seeing her little favourite

Georgiana,

Georgiana, who overwhelmed her with caresses; Ermina took her leave rather disappointed, that Lady Assop had never mentioned Sir Charles, notwithstanding the explanation that had taken place, more especially as she had not courage to make enquiries concerning him herself, though her curiosity was excessive to know his fate.

“ I am going to introduce a young soldier to you, my Ermina,” said Lord Valancey, the next morning, as they were seated at breakfast—“ He is the son of an old friend of mine; and a fine spirited fellow. He leaves England in five or six weeks; and should he call when I am not at home, I desire you will entertain him till my return, as I requested him, if I was absent, to ask for my grand-daughter. Perhaps you have heard of Lord Henry Beauchamp; for he is much talked of about town, as he is very handsome, and greatly admired by the ladies.” Confounded

at this information, Ermina found it difficult to articulate, but at length falteringly murmured out, that she had frequently heard him mentioned. Fortunately for her, the earl was carelessly tumbling over the leaves of a pamphlet as he spoke, which prevented his witnessing her confusion, as he must otherwise have done; and as she did not enlarge on the subject by asking any questions relative to Lord Henry, it was dismissed for other topics of conversation, apparently more interesting, but in reality quite indifferent to Ermina; who was all the time revolving in her mind in what manner she ought to act when she saw her former lover. She was, however, quite undecided, though inclined to think the best method she could pursue would be to treat him as a perfect stranger; yet still she could not determine on any thing, as she must be, in a great degree, guided by his behaviour; but, at all events, she hoped

hoped he would call when her grandfather was at home.

Contrary to her hopes, and wishes, a few minutes after Lord Valancey had been gone to take a ride in Hyde-park, Lord Henry Beauchamp was announced, and Ermina, trembling, arose to receive him. He started at the sight of her, and exclaimed, "Is it possible! Good Heavens, can, indeed, Lord Valancey's granddaughter and Ermina Montrose be the same persons? Tell me I am not deceived; say that you forgive me, and my life will be scarce sufficient to evince my gratitude." Undecided how to act, she was on the point of leaving him, notwithstanding it was her grandfather's wish that she should pay him every attention; but perceiving that, to avoid being importuned, she was quitting the room, he threw himself at her feet, entreating she would but listen to him for one minute.

“Unworthy as you may deem me,” he continued, “you cannot, surely, be so inflexible as to refuse this favour to a man who, however you disbelieve it, still loves you to distraction; and has been plunged, by his tenderness for you, into an abyss of misery, from which you alone can extricate him. Mrs. Helderton, who is now so dangerously ill as to have no hope left of her surviving, sent for me, and confessed how infamously she has traduced you and made me her egregious dupe; yet, credulous and suspicious as I have proved myself, you will, I hope, take pity on me when I firmly assure you, that whilst I strove to forget you, your image remained engraven on my heart, and my passion, instead of diminishing, gained every day new strength. Once more, therefore, I entreat you to pronounce my forgiveness.” “Rise, my lord,” replied Ermina, with affected haughtiness (for, though her heart relented in his favour, she determined

determined to punish him a little for what he had caused her to suffer from his jealous doubts)—“ I am exceedingly concerned that you should continue to nourish a passion I have, happily for myself, long since ceased to return, having effectually banished you from my heart ; but your present confession, though it cannot restore my love, which your ill treatment of me quickly effaced, yet gains you my esteem and friendship ;” and as she uttered these last words, with an assumed coldness and indifference, she held out her hand to him.

So well did she dissemble, that with an angry and mournful air mingled with surprise, Lord Henry rejected her proffered hand. “ Cruel, insulting woman,” said he, “ I will not accept your friendship : your love I require or nothing. Oh ! had I ever been truly valued, you would not thus have wounded my feelings by such cold language, but would eagerly have for-

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given

given errors for which I have been sufficiently punished. You might as well have commanded me to see you no more ; for to see you thus indifferent I cannot bear."

As he pronounced this, he drew out his handkerchief to hide the violence of his emotions ; then suddenly recovering himself, he was going to retire ; but, already repenting her dissimulation, she caught hold of his arm, imploring him to stay. Bursting, however, from her, with a painful struggle, he said, " Adieu, madam ! you have seen too much of my weakness ; may you feel remorse for your cruelty !" and rushing down stairs, he hastily opened the door, and was out of sight in a moment.

When Ermina found he was actually gone, she shed a torrent of tears ; displeased with her own conduct, from the fear of never seeing him more, and hurt at the reflection, that it would be caused by

by her own folly, in essaying to punish him for his jealousy; a punishment that was likely to recoil heavily on herself. While she was regretting her behaviour, the footman brought a letter, which, to her extreme surprise, came from Lord Henry, and was written at an hotel. It was to take a final farewell of her, and to entreat her pardon for the violence of his passions, and the injuries his mad jealousy had done her, for which she was already too cruelly revenged by the agony of his feelings, when he found he had to a certainty lost all interest in her heart. He concluded with saying, he should quit London in a few days, and England in five or six weeks, with pleasure; as he was now convinced he had lost all that gave a charm to life. This letter, which was a very long one (and of which we have only mentioned the principal subject), was written in the most pathetic style, and Ermina wept as she read it, from the fear

of losing a lover so faithful and so dear to her. Agitated beyond expression, she instantly wrote a short note to Lord Henry, to undeceive him, informing him of her real motives for behaving with an indifference that was assumed, and assuring him he was equally if not more dear to her than when he first confessed he loved her above every other woman. She immediately dispatched her servant to the hotel, when she had finished writing, and waited his return in anxious expectation. After being absent about half an hour, during which period she suffered all the agonies of suspense, he brought an answer from Lord Henry, in which he merely said he would be with her at one o'clock the next day. This intelligence calmed and soothed her mind, as she now hoped every thing would terminate to her satisfaction, since he would again condescend to see her after her cruel treatment. She was pleased with the hour Lord Henry had chosen to visit

visit her, as the earl would be absent, it being the time he always chose for riding; and she determined, unless he asked her, not to inform him that his lordship had called and seen her; and fortunately for her he neglected to make the enquiry, as she had secretly hoped he might.

With pleasure mingled with perturbation, Ermina heard his well-known voice speaking to the servant as he hastily ascended the stairs, his countenance having assumed its natural vivacity, whilst his eyes sparkled with a joy, at the sight of her, which he could not disguise, though he would gladly have done it, to convince her that he resented her cruelty of the preceding day. They soon came to an explanation that dispersed every uneasy thought, and Lord Henry again informed Ermina, that it was from Mrs. Helderton, who had been her greatest enemy, that he owed his present conviction of her innocence. Mor-

tified and enraged almost to madness at Bridget's defection from her, who she never suspected would betray her, as the part she took herself in the iniquitous schemes levelled against the happiness and character of Miss Montrose, would prevent her, she concluded, from divulging them, as by a disclosure she must implicate herself in the same guilt. But when she learnt, that to gratify her revenge she had sacrificed even her own reputation, by explaining her whole conduct to Lady Allop, and doubting not but her scandalous aspersions and treachery to Miss Montrose would reach the ears of all those from whom she wished to keep it concealed, the conflict her mind underwent, from terror and vexation, brought on a violent illness; and finding from her physician that there were little hopes of her recovery, she became, for the first moment in her life, overwhelmed with remorse for her crimes; and, endeavouring to make
all

all the atonement in her power, she sent for Lord Henry, who was opportunely in London, and imparted to him all the injuries she had done Ermina, imploring him to search her out, and entreat her to grant her forgiveness, as she should die easy knowing she had obtained it. Though shocked and wounded to the soul, at a knowledge of the base schemes to which the amiable and orphan Ermina had been made a victim, he could not reproach the repentant, dying Mrs. Helderton ; striving to afford her consolation, by saying he doubted not, from the angelic mind Miss Montrose possessed, that she would regret her errors, and sincerely forgive any injury done herself. This appeared to quiet the mind of the wretched penitent, of whom Lord Henry took his leave, and had not seen or heard any thing of her since ; as from that period, which was nearly a week, he had been so intently engaged in trying to discover Ermina's retreat, that

he had thought of nothing else, though chance had, at length, been more propitious in introducing him to her than all his fruitless and eager researches. It is true, he had seen her in the park ; but, at that moment, the remembrance of his ungenerous conduct towards her struck him so forcibly that he had not resolution to accost her ; and she was out of sight before he had gained sufficient courage, of which he severely repented afterwards.

Lord Henry now drew from the blushing Ermina a reluctant confession, that, notwithstanding the reasons she apparently had to detest him, he had always continued dear to her ; nor had he much difficulty in making her believe, that he should never have known happiness had he seen her united to another ; and his going to India was the most unequivocal proof that he could not conquer his attachment. Wholly absorbed in the pleasure of knowing

ing they were beloved and faithful to each other, neither of them remembered the cruel event which, in a few weeks, must separate them, perhaps, for ever; and they now recollected it but to plant daggers in their bosoms. "It is impossible for me," said Lord Henry (in answer to Ermina, who had suggested he might throw up his commission), "to decline going out to India, without dishonouring my character as a soldier, and, dearly as I love you, that I never could consent to do; nor would you, on reflection, wish me to disgrace myself. But would it be too great a sacrifice, my Ermina," said he, regarding her with the utmost tenderness, "for you to quit England with me? and, as we have been lovers so long, there will be no impropriety in our being united immediately; and, with your permission, I will speak to the earl on the subject." Though almost convinced in her own mind of her grandfather's disapprobation
of

of this plan, she had not resolution to oppose it, as he seemed so sanguine in his hopes; and, after what he had suffered on her account, she thought it would be cruelty to damp the ardour of his expectations. He remained with her till Lord Valancey came home, who apparently rejoiced to see him, invited him to dinner, when she perceived, with pleasure, he was a great favourite of her grandfather's, which made her pass one of the most pleasant evenings she had ever remembered to have enjoyed in her life.

Terefe, who had been informed of the reconciliation between Lord Henry and her mistress, came the next morning, when she was reading in her dressing-room, to tell her, that Lord Henry had been some time with the earl in the library, and that they appeared to be in very earnest conversation. This intelligence agitated Ermina exceedingly, and she was in an universal tremor,

tremor, when, about a quarter of an hour afterwards, she heard a gentle tap at her door, and the voice of Lord Henry, asking if he might be admitted. Joy and tenderness beamed in his countenance, and taking a chair, he seated himself beside her; and, taking her hand, thus addressed her: "If you, my sweet Ermina, will but shew me as much indulgence as I have received from your grandfather, I shall have little more to wish. I confided to him the commencement of our affections; the various trials we had both undergone; and my unfortunate resolution of leaving England, when smarting under your supposed infidelity. Affected by my narration, he exclaimed, 'Never would I again, from any selfish consideration, separate two beings who seemed destined for each other. All interested motives I renounce, and by promoting the happiness of my grand-daughter, I will endeavour to atone for the unrelenting cruelty with which I pursued

pursued her poor mother. This is Saturday; next Wednesday, therefore, if she consents, I fix for the nuptial day; as the few weeks you remain in England renders it necessary that it should soon take place; and you have both suffered so severely, that I wish, as much as possible, to be a spectator of your happiness. Of Lord Darlington's consent to the match, I have no doubt; and leave to me the care of speaking to him on the subject.' I warmly expressed to your venerable parent the gratitude which I felt for his goodness in being so favourable to my wishes, and came in search of you, my Ermina, with whom it only now remains to decide my future fate or misery." Filled with confusion and surprise at a decision so speedy and unexpected, she hesitated, and could with difficulty articulate; but, recovering herself, she assured Lord Henry, that though she wished the time fixed had not been quite so early, she was resigned to whatever

Lord

Lord Valancey approved, and would contribute to his own happiness; being happy to have it in her power to reward his sufferings, and, at any period he pleased, to bestow her hand on him who would have raised her, when poor and destitute, to his rank and affluence. This kind and condescending answer charmed Lord Henry, and, quite enraptured, he took his leave, animated with delight at the prospect of his approaching felicity, in being united to so grateful and amiable a woman.

As four days only were to elapse before the marriage took place, Ermina had scarcely time to think of any thing, so much was she occupied in preparations and giving orders for her bridal dress, &c. which put her into the most delightful bustle imaginable. At length the morn arrived which gave the virtuous, lovely Ermina Montrose to the elegant, noble, and accomplished Lord Henry Beauchamp; and,
conscious

conscious of each other's affection and mutual worth, they hailed the day on which they were to be united as the happiest of their lives. When the clergyman had pronounced the nuptial ceremony, Lord and Lady Beauchamp, Sir John and Lady Affop, with Merelina Heywood, and the Earl of Valancey, set off for an elegant villa, which the latter had near Windsor, where they passed a week in the most delightful manner, when they returned to Belvidere-house, where the new-married pair were to remain till they sailed for India. Though Lord Darlington had consented to the match, yet was his heart stung with remorse for his frequent attempts to sully the reputation of Miss Montrose, and he made some plausible excuse to be absent at the wedding, and saw as little of his son and daughter-in-law as possible, which they were far from regretting; for though they evinced duty and respect towards him, he could not gain their esteem.

In

In the enjoyment of happiness, pure, exquisite, and serene, and which this world rarely produces, the moments flew rapidly away, till they nearly reached the time when they were to embark for India. Then did Lady Beauchamp again feel sorrow, though she was to accompany her beloved Lord Henry, at quitting her native country, the dear friends of her youth, and lastly, but dearest of all, her valuable grandfather, down whose venerable cheeks she frequently observed the tear to steal as he looked at her, and which she was conscious flowed from the fear that he might not behold her more. Her heart now became torn with inexpressible grief; for she trembled lest the loss of her society might make him sink earlier to the grave, or embitter his declining years, which it would have been her pride and happiness to have comforted. Her husband, who saw with anxiety her visible uneasiness, with some difficulty drew from her a confession

fession of the cause; and then, nobly re-
 gardful of her peace of mind, insisted, se-
 vere as the sacrifice was to himself, that
 she should remain with her grandfather for
 three years; at the expiration of which pe-
 riod, he doubted not getting exchanged,
 and might then return to England with ho-
 nour; or, if that should not be the case,
 she should then come out to him. This
 self-denial endeared him, if it were possi-
 ble, still more to Ermina, and caused her
 regret to be poignant in the extreme, at
 their unavoidable separation.

Acute, therefore, were the pangs she
 felt; and when the fatal dreaded moment
 arrived that parted this amiable, virtuous,
 and affectionate pair, Ermina sunk, faint-
 ing in his last embrace; and he seized,
 with anguish, this moment of oblivion, to
 tear himself from all his soul held dearest
 upon earth, and hurried, almost insensible,
 into the chaise, which was to bear him to
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the vessel in which he was to sail for India. The earl, who perceived the full value of the sacrifice made him by the anguish both suffered at bidding each other adieu, redoubled his attention and tenderness to Ermina, who, happy in the reflection, that to no selfish feeling she had sacrificed her duty, recovered her tranquillity, though her thoughts never wandered from her absent lord, many of her hours being devoted to writing to him. She had, eight months after his departure, a subject to write on very interesting to them both, which was a sweet little boy to whom she had given birth, and whose dark blue eyes and light hair often reminded her of his father, whose striking resemblance he was, and became a great source of consolation to her, soothing many tedious and unhappy hours that elapsed, till Lord Henry's return. This happy event took place, as he had predicted, at the conclusion of three years; and no description can do justice to the exquisite rapture of that meeting,

meeting, and the delight of Lord Henry at the sight of their beautiful boy. In what pure and permanent pleasures do those who love and are beloved again, like this faithful pair, have their moments glide away; for every object, embellished by their affection, wears, to them, a look of happiness. The beauties of nature have for them a more pleasing charm than for any one else, the flowers a sweeter perfume, the rivulets a more refreshing coolness, and the birds a more harmonious song; whilst those who love no one but themselves, pass their whole lives in incessant gloom, similar to the dreary days of winter, and like to a decayed tree, that never gratifies the eye with its blossoms.

Lord Valancey, thoroughly reformed from his errors, of which he sincerely repented, lived the most exemplary life, and died at an advanced age, ejaculating blessings on his grand-daughter, her husband, and their children.

Sir

Sir Charles Melrofs, having conquered his unfortunate attachment, met Ermina, with little emotion, about six months after her marriage, at the house of their mutual friend Lady Affop, where she was accompanied by Merelina Heywood, with whose person he was immediately captivated, and a subsequent knowledge of whose amiable qualities inspired him a second time with such a true and ardent passion, that he made her an offer of his hand, and, by her acceptance of it, was rendered one of the happiest of men. It gave, likewise, the purest satisfaction to her parents and Ermina, who were delighted at beholding her united to a man of worth and fortune.

Mrs. Helderton expired soon after she had received Ermina's forgiveness, in the most excruciating torments both of body and mind; a melancholy example of the punishment that generally awaits vice in this world, and which, by seeking to destroy

stroy the peace and fame of others, often rushes on its own destruction.

Increasing in depravity and profligacy of conduct, Glencarnock was detested and shunned by every being who had the least character to sustain, as it was disgraceful in the extreme to be acquainted with him. Feeling himself abandoned and forlorn, he prevailed on a poor girl, of low extraction and much distressed, to whom his situation and fortune (small as it was) became an object, to unite her destiny with his; and, as she had a great spirit, she kept him, after their marriage, entirely under her subjection, rendering him completely miserable. By no one was he pitied; he lived wretched, and died early, unlamented. His friend Squire Brandon triumphantly pursued his career of wickedness for some years; but at length reaped the reward of his crimes, by being mortally wounded in a duel, by a gentleman whose sister he had seduced.

Lady

Lady Julia Desmond returned to England, after an absence of eighteen months, and renewed her acquaintance with Ermina. As Mr. Desmond's fortune was large, she had it more in her power to indulge in dissipation, and consequently led the most gay and fashionable life; till age came on ere she was aware of its rapid progress, and, stealing from her all the charms of youth and beauty, left no other resource for the amusement of her dissipated mind, but cards, satire, and scandal, as she had never taken any pleasure in rational diversions or useful employments.

All those persons who had been accessory to the misfortunes of Ermina, lived to repent their conduct; to implore her forgiveness; to suffer for the injuries they had done her; and to receive relief, when sinking under the pressure of calamity, from her beneficence, whom they had endeavoured to wrong.

The worthy sister Madelaine wrote from the convent of St. Catherine the warm effusions of joy that flowed from her heart at the knowledge of her dear child's (as she loved to call her) felicity, accompanied by the congratulations of the superior, and those nuns who knew and esteemed her. Ermina and Lord Henry, some years afterwards, visited France, purposely to see the good sister, whose exquisite satisfaction (as well as their own) at this mutual meeting is more easily to conceive than describe.

Every being to whose friendship Ermina was indebted when in adversity, was sought out by her in prosperity, that she might evince her gratitude towards them; and the excellent Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield were amongst the first to whom she endeavoured to shew a grateful sense of their kindness to her; for to repay her obligations to them was quite impossible. They rejoiced in the good fortune of their beloved

beloved favourite ; and continued, the remainder of their lives, to exercise that same benevolence to the stranger and afflicted, that had saved her, most probably, from misery and ruin, and gained them the sweet approbation of their own hearts.

No other circumstances occurred to disturb the felicity of Lord and Lady Beauchamp, which was now fixed on a lasting basis. They resided chiefly in the country, with Lord Valancey, passing but three months every year in town ; and wherever they went they were followed by the sincere and fervent blessings of numberless poor indigents who were fostered by their bounty. The natural generosity and goodness of Lady Beauchamp's disposition being refined and improved by affliction, induced her always to more particularly befriend those young and hapless females who were (as she herself had been) thrown, destitute of fortune and connexions, on the world ; and the affability
and

and sweetness with which she conferred a favour, stamped double value on it. She had three sons and two daughters; the former possessing all the spirit, liberality, and elegance of their father; and the latter the beauty, softness, and worth of their mother. Attached to each other with increasing esteem and regard, as year rolled on after year, they gently descended together into the vale of life, respected and beloved by their friends and acquaintance, and warmly endeared to their children by the tenderness and justice with which they discharged their parental duties, presenting the most enchanting picture that was ever drawn of conjugal and domestic felicity. And when, at length, their mild angelic spirits sunk almost together in the calm repose of death, they were prepared by religion, and the good they had performed, for a better world.

Together freed, their gentle spirits fly

To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign.

FINIS.

T. Davison,
White-Friars.

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